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WITHOUT THE SLIGHTEST WARNING LORD NORMAN FIRED AT THE FOREMOST BRIGAND.

LORD NORMAN'S WARD.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

"My mother always warned me against taking that girl," said Lord Norman, and a frown came over his severe, but handsome face. "She told me I should find Iola wilful and ungrateful, and I have done so much for that girl. It is certainly very discouraging."

There was an expression of perplexity on Lord Norman's brow as he glanced at a letter that lay upon the table. The matter was very annoying indeed.

Lord Norman was a very wealthy man, and a person of undoubted ability. It was well known to his friends that he had never done a mean or dishonourable action in his life, but still he was

not a great favourite with anyone, being so cold and austere. He had been brought up strictly and sternly, with the result that his nature had been spoiled.

About two years before our story opens, Lord Norman, while driving a spirited horse through a crowded street, accidentally knocked down a girl. She was so much injured that it was considered necessary to convey her to a hospital, but Lord Norman would not hear of such a thing.

It was through him that the girl had been thrown down, and it was his duty to take care of her, and see that she wanted for nothing.

He placed her in his carriage, and drove her to his own mansion in Park-lane, where she was treated with every consideration, and in a few weeks was perfectly well.

During Iola's illness Lord Norman had gone to her parents, who were very poor and struggling, and not at all nice people in any way. His offer to adopt Iola was accepted at once.

Lord Norman had not taken Iola from any

sudden liking, but only from a sense of duty. His mother was very indignant at his foolishness, as she called it, and declared that he would live to regret his act of kindness, but he only answered that, whatever came of it, he would do his duty, and look well after the girl.

Lady Norman had taken a violent dislike to Iola, who, to tell the truth, was passionate and self-willed, and inclined to be impudent at times.

It did not seem to Lady Norman that Iola was half respectful enough to her son for saving her from a life of labour and poverty, and possible degradation.

Lady Norman, Christian as she called herself, did sincerely believe that there was a vast gulf between the rich and the poor.

Iola, from the moment she became well, began ordering the servants about. She fully enjoyed the luxury that now surrounded her, and made up her mind to make the most of her position.

The strangest part of it all was that she took everything as a matter of course, and was not

at all awe-struck at the splendid mansion or powdered footman.

If she had been presented to the Queen of England she would not have betrayed any nervousness, for Iola was a philosopher, young as she was.

In after years this natural ease of manner was very useful to her, and many girls of aristocratic birth, with any amount of blue blood in their veins, envied her self-possession.

Iola was very much hurt at her father and mother's eagerness to get rid of her, but she never thought how much she felt it.

There was one person, however, who regretted very much Iola's adoption, and this was Edward Varley, a boy about her own age, who was very fond of her.

She had never given him any encouragement—in fact, she had treated him disdainfully; but he worshipped her, and, when possible, had always seen her to and from work.

"Now you are going to be brought up as a lady you'll forget all about me," said Edward, sadly; but Iola only gave a merry little laugh, that pained the lad much more than words can express. He did not like to see her so light of heart in going away, when he was so sad.

Iola could not help smiling at the change in the manner of her late employers. They had been none too considerate when she had been working for them; but now all was changed, and they apologized for their treatment of her.

The fact of her being adopted by rich nobleman raised her in the estimation of a great many people, and Iola was sharp enough to observe this.

We may as well give the contents of the letter that annoyed Lord Norman so much.

"MY LORD"—It began—"I have put off writing this letter for some days, hoping that there would be some improvement in Miss Day's conduct, but although I have given her every opportunity to reform, she has resolutely continued to defy me, and even ridicules my authority to my face and before my other pupils. Her example has become contagious in the school, and the girls are growing as unmanageable as she is. I have only one course to pursue, and that is, to expel Miss Day, and I must request you to remove her from my school at once. It seems such a pity that she should go on in this way, for she is a bright and clever girl."

"The little demon! What in the world am I to do with her?" muttered Lord Norman, and his mother coming into the room overheard his words. Lady Norman was a handsome woman, but rather harsh and stern-looking.

"I know of whom you are talking," she observed, with a slight frown. "You are speaking of Iola."

"Why, mother, how did you guess that?" asked Norman, in surprise.

"Iola is the only little demon I know," said Lady Norman, as she seated herself. Iola had always come home for the holidays, and there had always been disagreements between her and Lady Norman. Certainly the antipathy was mutual. There was no love lost between them.

"Well, the fact of the matter is that Iola has been expelled from school," Madame Leslie requests me to fetch her at once," said Lord Norman. "The girl is certainly acting very foolishly."

"She is acting disgracefully!" said Lady Norman, and there was a spiteful gleam in her eyes. "But then, what can one expect from a girl in her position in life? Did I not tell you that you would regret having taken her?"

"You warned me against her from the first," admitted Lord Norman, "and are never tired of telling me off."

"You must send her back to her parents at once. I am so glad to think that you are released from such a great responsibility. I can tell you that it is a great relief to me."

"I can't send her back home, mother!" said Lord Norman in his earnest, decided way.

"Why not?" asked Lady Norman impatiently.

"Because it is my duty to do all I can for her. I have undertaken to see after her, and I mean to do it, cost what it may."

"You are very headstrong and obstinate," Lady Norman declared, "and I am sure that girl is not worth all that trouble."

"I do not think she is worth all this trouble myself," said Lord Norman; "but, you see, I have promised to look after her. Besides, I cannot take her back to her parents, for they have moved, and I don't know where they have gone to. It would be an act of brutality to send her back to her miserable home after bringing her up to luxury and comfort."

"You could find out her people if you liked!" said Lady Norman, impatiently. "You'll find this adopted daughter a great nuisance when you are married."

"If ever I do," replied Lord Norman; and, seeing that he was resolute, Lady Norman ceased to argue with him, knowing that it would be worse than useless to do so. Lady Norman had never known her son after his mind if he was once resolved upon anything.

The sense of duty was strong within him, and if he thought he was right, nothing would induce him to alter his determination.

Lord Norman had a stern sense of justice, and always acted straightforwardly according to his lights; but in spite of the uprightness of his life, Lord Norman was not a happy or a contented man. Something was wanted in his life. There was a void that wanted filling up.

His existence was almost too monotonous and mechanical, and at times he would be overtaken with fits of depression with which he vainly tried to combat. It was seldom that Lord Norman laughed, and he always seemed quite surprised if he did so.

As soon as Lord Norman had snatched a hasty meal he started off to fetch Iola, feeling very angry with the girl for giving him so much trouble.

It seemed so much like black ingratitude that she should in this way act, considering all and everything he had done for her. He would speak to her very severely when they met; such conduct must not be tolerated.

In his own mind he now regretted not having allowed Iola to be taken to the hospital; but the past could not be recalled. The girl was on his hands, and he must make the best of it.

It would not have mattered so much if it had not been for his mother, who was so continually talking of Iola's delinquencies. He had grown quite tired of the subject, as can easily be understood, and often took the girl's part when he knew her to be wrong, simply because he was so much bothered about her.

Considering the way Iola had been brought up, allowances ought to have been made for her; but such was not the case.

Lord Norman was harsh and stern, and his mother, when she spoke to Iola, was harsh and disagreeable, and altogether too patronizing.

Iola was not proud of her position, and wished that her father had not been in such a hurry to get rid of her.

She felt she was living on charity, and did not like it, and sometimes was inclined to run away from school.

Sometimes she was quite frightened of Lord Norman, and wondered he had taken the trouble to adopt her; at other times she would be insolently defiant.

Iola was a clever girl, and, although she was unruly, always distinguished herself, and no governess complained of her for neglecting her lessons.

The school was not far from London, and Lord Norman soon arrived there. He was at once taken to Madame Leslie, who was profuse in her apologies for having expelled Iola; but her school would have been ruined, she said, in conclusion, for Iola was so very intractable.

Lord Norman owned that the schoolmistress was justified in what she had done.

"Now let me see Iola!" he said.

Madame Leslie went in search of Iola, and, Lord Norman, having nothing better to do,

looked out of the window at the dull playground.

There was only one person to be seen in the dismal place, and this was a girl on a swing. Short-sighted as Lord Norman was, he recognized Iola, and while he was looking at her Madame Leslie appeared upon the scene.

Iola was evidently of an obstinate disposition, for when Madame Leslie spoke to her, and told her she was wanted, she kept on swinging for fully five minutes before she would consent to come indoors.

Lord Norman saw this and frowned darkly, for it seemed as though Iola was quite incorrigible.

As Madame Leslie and Iola came down the garden path together, the lady looked as if she would have liked to have given the girl a good shaking, but she saw Lord Norman standing at the window.

Since her last act of disobedience Iola had not been allowed to associate with the other girls, who were now in the schoolroom, thus it happened that Iola was in the playground alone.

Lord Norman drew himself up and looked very stern, when the door was opened, and mistress and pupil entered the room. Iola looked very beautiful at that moment, and Lord Norman could not help noticing it, notwithstanding that her hair was hanging about wildly, and she was in a very untidy state, and did not look as a scholar at a fashionable boarding-school usually looks. The girl was in a more than usually defiant humour that morning, and her glaring, and wicked, mischievous eyes glittered defiantly as she stood before Lord Norman.

"I am sorry to hear such a dreadful account of you," said Lord Norman, and his voice sounded dreadfully harsh.

"Oh, I know Madame Leslie has been telling awful stories about me," cried Iola; "but you must not believe all she says. You don't know how spiteful she can be. I declare she has pinched my arms till they are quite black and blue."

She turned up her loose sleeve as she spoke, and exhibited some very blue-looking marks, and Madame Leslie turned very red in the face, and looked uncomfortable.

Lord Norman saw at once that she had done what Iola accused her of; but he did not blame the schoolmistress much, seeing how troublesome the girl was. Lord Norman had often felt inclined to box her ears himself, but of course he was too much of a gentleman to strike a girl. Iola was certainly very aggravating, no one knew that more than he.

"I am sorry Miss Day ever came to my school," said Madame Leslie. "She has made all the young ladies almost as bad as herself. You have no idea, Lord Norman, how self-willed she can be. I don't know what will become of her, I am sure!"

Iola looked at Madame Leslie and gave a defiant laugh, displaying her white, glistening teeth.

"I wonder you can laugh in this way after the disgrace of being expelled," said Lord Norman, severely. "You have displeased me greatly, Iola, and I don't know how to express my annoyance at your conduct, which is most unladylike."

"Is it such an awful disgrace to be expelled?" asked Iola, looking at Lord Norman incredulously, as if she did not take his words half seriously. Perhaps she was in hopes that he would smile, but he did nothing of the kind, and frowned darkly down upon her in his lordly displeasure, "looking at me just as though I was a naughty child," as Iola afterwards expressed it.

"It is a great disgrace, and worse for a girl than a boy," said Lord Norman. "I was quite angry when I received Madame Leslie's letter."

"And you look angry now," said Iola, folding her arms. "Don't frown at me like that, Lord Norman. It seems so unkind, for I feel sure I have done nothing to deserve it."

"It is my duty to tell you when you do wrong," observed Lord Norman, as he took out his purse to pay Madame Leslie's account. "It is very unpleasant for me to hear such a bad account of you; but although your conduct to

Madame Leslie has been very bad, I am glad that you have not neglected your studies. You see I find fault when you do wrong, and praise you when you deserve it."

"I learn because I like it, and it comes easy to me," replied Iola.

She was not trying to appear to advantage that day. If Lord Norman had spoken to her more kindly he would have done a great deal more good; but it must be remembered that he did not care a bit about Iola, and it was only from a sense of duty that he took any trouble over the girl at all.

"If Madame Leslie would overlook your conduct, and let you remain here," said Lord Norman, quietly, "would you promise to be a better girl?"

"No," said Iola.

Then Madame Leslie gave Lord Norman a glance, which plainly expressed, "You see what a girl she is, a regular vixen."

"You are showing yourself in a more unfavourable light every moment," said Lord Norman, "and fully justify all that Madame Leslie has said against you. Be guided by me, and beg Madame Leslie's pardon."

"Her pardon!" said Iola, with flashing eyes, and her face grew flushed, and she actually stamped her feet. "Her pardon!" she cried, in a still louder voice, "I'd sooner die first, than I would, for I hate her!"

If Iola had been his own daughter he would have been even angrier than he was. She seemed so rebellious and defiant. It was difficult to know what to do with such a creature.

"I am sure I don't know what to do with you, Iola," said Lord Norman, looking at the girl as if she were some wild animal whom it was necessary to tame. "I really believe that you are growing worse instead of showing any signs of improvement."

"You need not scold me before her!" said Iola, pointing to Madame Leslie, and looking deeply mortified.

"Then you positively refuse to remain here, even if Madame Leslie consents to overlook your conduct?"

"If you leave me here I'll run away!" said Iola, desperately; and it was clear to Lord Norman that she meant what she said.

It was evident that Iola had a will of her own, and he saw that he would have great difficulty to manage the girl.

"In that case I suppose I must take you away!" said Lord Norman, in doubtful tones.

"Oh! how kind and good of you, Lord Norman!" cried Iola, in the greatest delight; and in her gratitude she was quite demonstrative, and actually took his hand, to his surprise. "You don't know how hateful this school has become to me!"

"So you can be very gracious when you get your way!" said Lord Norman, still stern and repellent.

"Of course, everyone likes to have their own way!" said Iola, looking bright and happy, to Lord Norman's secret satisfaction. "You don't know how tired I get of listening to the talk of a lot of stupid schoolgirls! I should like you to have to listen to it just for one week! I am sure it would drive you mad!"

"You'll find that you will not have your own way always," said Lord Norman; and then he added, sarcastically, "Perhaps you'll wash your face and hands, and make yourself presentable; and I think a comb and brush would improve your appearance a little bit!"

Iola looked half-inclined to make some savage answer, but Lord Norman glanced at her so sternly that she was abashed for the moment, and went out of the room without speaking another word.

It was quite half an hour before she reappeared, and then it was evident that she had taken great pains with herself.

She looked so very beautiful now that it was strange that Lord Norman was not proud of his adopted daughter, but he only looked at her coldly and critically; but there was no admiration in his eyes, and Iola felt rather annoyed at this.

Lord Norman did not speak a word to the

girl going up in the train, for he wanted her to understand how very angry he was.

The girl felt inclined to speak to him more than once, but he seemed so absorbed in his own thoughts that she did not like to do so. He appeared to have forgotten her very existence.

A carriage was waiting for them at the London station; and, as she stepped into it, Iola heard a joyous cry, and, looking round, saw her old companion Edward.

"Oh, Iola!—Miss Day!" cried the young man, confusedly, "I am so glad to see you!"

He was poorly, but neatly dressed.

"Please don't make a scene!" cried Iola, who was evidently ashamed of her old companion. "I must say good-bye; I am now in a hurry!"

Lord Norman looked on with a bitter smile, and as the carriage drove away, and he saw the look of pain in the youth's face, he thought to himself,—

"Iola is utterly heartless!"

CHAPTER II.

LORD NORMAN'S mother was not over gracious to Iola when she arrived at the town mansion. She was cruelly cold and disagreeable, and evidently desired that the girl should see how much she disapproved her presence in that house. Iola did not try to conciliate the old lady; it was not in her nature to do so.

Iola did not allow this cold reception to damp her spirits. She was so delighted to get away from school that nothing could hurt her feelings.

Bright and animated she looked, and her only regret was that Lord Norman should look so stern and cross.

It was a source of wonder to Iola that a man so handsome as Lord Norman, with such pleasant surroundings, should be so quiet and moody, and so awfully old for his age. It would be so very nice if he would make himself pleasant and agreeable. The house was certainly a dismal place for a young girl.

That evening Iola went to the piano unasked, and played and sang in a brilliant style, and with real strength and feeling; but if Lord Norman approved of her singing, he gave no indications of it; so Iola, after that night, did not venture to open the piano again when he was at home.

Lord Norman, although he surrounded Iola with every luxury, did not consider it necessary to provide her with any amusements. He was trying to train up Iola as his mother had brought him up, but nothing could tame the girl's wild spirits.

Although Lord Norman showed so little partiality for Iola, the girl began to like him little by little. He seemed so grand and clever to her in every way, but she detested his horrid old mother.

She often wondered why a man in Lord Norman's position should work so terribly hard! Indeed, he kept himself so busy that he looked positively haggard at times.

At length Lord Norman became quite accustomed to Iola, and would have missed her, perhaps, if she had gone away. It was her hand that poured out his tea, and he sometimes found himself glancing at her admiringly. It was certainly a pity that Iola was not a better girl. If her temper had been as sweet as her looks all would have been well; but unfortunately it was not so. We must admit that Lady Norman did all in her power to put Iola in a most unfavourable light.

Very often, when Lord Norman came home tired and in need of rest, his mother would come and give him a long list of Iola's delinquencies, and then when they met the girl would wonder why he looked so cross, and scarcely utter a word to her.

Iola tried to take an interest in those things which occupied Lord Norman, but she found it a difficult task, for he was so much better and cleverer than she was, she often told herself.

There was not a man in London who gave away more than Lord Norman, but he had never been

known to bestow a penny on a beggar in his life. Hospitals and asylums was where his money went, and he simply gave his money away from a sense of duty.

Iola had been from school about six months, and by that time could see that Lord Norman had many good and sterling qualities, notwithstanding his austerity of manner; but it was clear to her that he took his life a little too seriously.

"If I could only make him gay and light-hearted," she thought to herself, and immediately did all in her power to do so.

Iola, by a thousand womanly tricks, exerted herself to amuse Lord Norman, and great was her joy when she succeeded in culling a smile from him.

Lord Norman began to fancy he saw some improvement in Iola's behaviour, but the accounts his mother gave him of the girl's conduct drove him to despair. Iola was so nice and pleasant when in his society that he began to think that she must be cunning and deceitful; but such was not the case.

This is what it was. Liking Lord Norman, she did all that lay in her power to please him; detesting Lady Norman, she exerted herself to the utmost to vex her.

Doubtless, this was very wrong, but it was very natural.

One morning Lord Norman and Iola were breakfasting alone, Lady Norman being too unwell to appear. That morning Lord Norman was unusually cheerful and chatty, and Iola was delighted.

"If he would only be always like this and not reproach himself," she thought. "He seems to think it almost wicked to smile and laugh."

"Do you know, Iola, that you are improving a little?" said Lord Norman kindly.

"Only a little!" cried Iola, opening her eyes and blushing.

"Well, you are not half so wild as you were," said Lord Norman; "and I am sure you are growing more sensible."

Iola looked down at the carpet. She was so glad that Lady Norman was not there, for in her presence Lord Norman and Iola scarcely exchanged a word.

"I am afraid I am not very clever," said Iola. "Your mother is always calling me obstinate and stupid and ungrateful."

"My mother often complains to me of your conduct," observed Lord Norman, "and it pains me very much. Why can't you try to please her? You ought to remember that she is so much older than you."

"So Lady Norman speaks against me behind my back," said Iola, frowning up, and Lord Norman had not seen her in such a temper for a long time. "I now understand why you are sulky with me all at once, and will hardly speak a word."

"Do you mean to tell me in all honesty that you do nothing to justify my mother's complaints to me?" cried Lord Norman.

Iola hesitated as to what reply she would make. She wished to stand well in Lord Norman's eyes, and yet she did not like to tell a lie. The struggle was over in a moment, and truth prevailed.

"Well, I do many things to worry your mother," she admitted.

"But why?"

"Because she doesn't like me and I don't like her," replied Iola.

For a moment the hard, stern expression came into Lord Norman's face, and Iola trembled, for of late she feared his anger greatly. Why, she did not know, because he would not hurt her. The harsh, dominating look remained on his face for a moment and then faded away as quickly as it had come, but the smile had not come back.

"Are you never actuated by a sense of duty?" asked Lord Norman, glancing at Iola with his keen and penetrating grey eyes.

"No," answered the girl.

"Then I am sorry for you," said Lord Norman, and the girl knew that she had offended him.

There was one thing that Lord Norman liked

Iola for, and that was because she was truthful. He had never known her to sink to the meanness of a lie. In this respect she was honesty itself. He could always take her word. It was above suspicion.

"Sorrow for me, Lord Norman!" cried Iola, struck by his manner and his tone. "Am I so very wicked, then?" and there were actually tears in her honest, dark brown eyes.

"You are not wicked but thoughtless," replied Lord Norman, speaking in more gentle tones now that he saw those tears. "Now, don't you think it is your duty to obey my mother, seeing how much she is older than yourself?"

"I'll try and do so," said Iola gently; to Lord Norman's delight, and, seeing she had pleased him, the girl felt happy.

After this conversation Iola's behaviour to Lady Norman underwent a sudden change. She was kind and considerate, and put up with her ill-temper. The girl's amiability did not have the desired effect. On the contrary, Lady Norman grew more imperious and domineering, and made Iola's life as unpleasant as she could; but she was brave and resolute.

"Lord Norman has asked me to bear with Lady Norman, and I'll do it," said Iola; and she kept her word, although the task was a most difficult one to carry out. There is nothing more trying in the whole world than an attempt to conciliate a person who will not be conciliated—so, at least, Iola found.

Lord Norman heard no more complaints against Iola, for Lady Norman could not with justice make any, seeing that the girl did nothing to deserve them.

If it had not been for Lady Norman Iola would have been very happy; but still her life, on the whole, was a very pleasant one, particularly when Lord Norman was in the way.

Very often in the evening now Lord Norman would ask Iola to sing, and the girl would exert herself to the utmost to please him. He seemed to enjoy the evenings very much, and so did Iola; but Lady Norman did not like to see her son and the girl on such good terms.

Lady Norman regarded Iola with the greatest suspicion, for it occurred to her that she wished to marry Lord Norman for his money.

Lady Norman was very proud, and she did not like the idea of her son marrying a person whom he had taken out of charity.

Although Iola was educated and accomplished, Lady Norman could not forget that she did not come of an aristocratic family.

It seemed to the good lady that Lord Norman would be throwing himself away if he married Iola—a girl of the people.

Why had the girl so suddenly changed and become so submissive? Lady Norman now did all in her power to make Iola lose her temper, by making use of taunts and insults.

The girl would not have been made of flesh and blood if she had borne such words in silence, and, although she regretted it afterwards, she answered back.

When Lord Norman returned home he found his mother in tears, and when he asked her what was the matter, she told him that it was that wretch of a girl!

Lord Norman sent for Iola and heard her version of the story, and was compelled to own that his mother was in the wrong.

White with passion, Lady Norman went out of the room, slamming the door after her in a very unladylike way.

There was a great deal of difference between the mother and son. All the time Iola had known him she had never heard him raise his voice in anger. If he was in a temper he always spoke like a reasonable creature. It was generally admitted by everyone that Lord Norman was a thorough gentleman.

"I think I had better go away," said Iola, bursting into tears, "for I had no intention of making a quarrel between mother and son."

It was the first real disagreement of a serious character that Lord Norman and Lady Norman had ever had, and he felt vexed.

"Where could you go to, child?" asked Lord Norman kindly.

"I neither know nor care," said Iola, in a low, sobbing voice. "But it is clear to me that I am not wanted here. You must see how unpleasant my position is in this house. I wish, when you had knocked me down, you had killed me."

"You are talking foolishly," said Lord Norman, sitting beside the sobbing girl on the sofa. "My mother will soon get over her temper."

"But not over her dislike for me," replied Iola. "Dislike, however, is not the word. I mean her hatred. What have I done to offend her?"

Iola seemed really troubled, and Lord Norman felt sorry for her, and tried to console her all he could, and that evening kissed her for the first time on her snow white forehead.

After the quarrel with her son, Lady Norman was freezingly polite to Iola; but she never had another disagreement with her. In fact, they spent as little time as they could in each other's society.

About this time Lord Norman came to the conclusion that Iola ought to have more pleasure, and not be shut up altogether in that lonely old house. He even blamed himself for his selfishness in not thinking of it before, and took her to the opera, and a theatre, and even to a ball.

At this time Iola was perfectly happy; but a cloud came upon her unexpectedly when everything seemed so bright and so fair.

It is a strange thing, but directly Iola's eyes rested upon Rose Dudley she took a lasting antipathy to her.

A woman's instinct is generally infallible in these matters, and she felt this lady to be her enemy and rival.

Rose Dudley was some years older than Iola, and, when introduced, treated Iola in a patronising way, which the girl was sharp enough to resent.

Iola was not the kind of girl to be put upon in any way, and, before they parted, after their introduction, succeeded in making Rose lose her temper.

Lady Norman, on the other hand, was delighted with Rose, and invited her to come and see her.

The idea struck Lady Norman that her son ought to marry Rose Dudley. If she could bring this about she would spoil that designing girl's plans, as she called Iola.

Rose Dudley became a constant visitor at Lord Norman's house. She was a fair, plausible woman, and succeeded in making a favourable impression on his lordship.

She pretended to take a great interest in Lord Norman's philanthropic schemes, and they would often be seen together at charity meetings, and Lord Norman regarded Rose as a very good woman indeed.

She was not all the woman he would fall in love with, but she was a very charming friend.

We will not tell all the wicked thoughts that came into poor little Iola's heart against Rose. She had known Lord Norman so much longer than her. Why should she come between them now? How she envied Rose when she drove or walked with Lord Norman!

Iola fancied that Lord Norman's liking for her grew less and less since the appearance of Rose. This was not really the case, for he liked her just the same; but then Rose Dudley was always attracting his attention to some new scheme and keeping him constantly in employment.

The activity of this woman was simply wonderful, and she seemed quite enthusiastic in the business, and seemed to enter into it heart and soul.

Lord Norman was rich and handsome, and it was worth while to pretend to be charitable for the sake of winning him. Besides, philanthropy was fashionable just then, and quite the rage.

Rose was a constant visitor at the children's hospital, and took any quantity of toys. Lady Norman was delighted at the turn affairs had taken. It seemed to her that she had completely outwitted Iola.

At first Iola grew cross and moody, and then artificially high-spirited, and seemed to take no interest now in frivolous amusements. The fact of the matter was that she had just made a discovery that filled her with terror and

alarm. She had found out that she was in love with Lord Norman—a man who did not care for her a bit. Her pride was humbled to the dust when she found out the state of his heart. Very often she would sob herself to sleep, but before the world she was bright and animated.

It never does in this world to let others see what we feel. It is best to keep one's secrets, even if they are innocent ones. She behaved in just the same manner to Lord Norman, but kept out of his way when possible.

Iola often fancied that Rose guessed that she loved Lord Norman, and this idea terrified the girl. She would rather anyone know her secret than this woman, whom Iola was sure was not half so good as she would have it appear. Women are very clever in seeing into each other's minds.

"I really believe that my son is in love with Rose," said Lady Norman to Iola one evening. "Don't you think they will make a very handsome couple?"

She looked strangely at Iola as she spoke; but the girl kept a good command over her face, and the lady could read nothing from it. Iola was growing very discreet, and was learning to keep a stern command over herself, as women will when they have some great secret to conceal.

"They are both tall and handsome," said Iola, "and their tastes seem so much alike; but they have hardly known each other any time yet."

On the same evening when the above conversation occurred Lord Norman suddenly came upon Iola, and was greatly surprised to find her in bitter tears.

She had seemed so bright and happy of late that he was more than astonished. He had not the slightest suspicion of the truth. The girl made an attempt to rush from the room, but he would not allow her to do so. With gentle and kindly force he pushed her back into the chair, and when she ceased to sob took her hand in his.

"Why, what is the matter, Iola?" he asked, in an anxious voice, and his voice sounded softer in her ears than it had ever sounded before.

"Nothing!" was the reply.

"I am afraid my mother has been unkind to you," said Lord Norman, and he looked very angry.

"No, no! It is not that!" replied Iola.

"What is it, then? You can put confidence in me!"

"I don't feel very well," said Iola, "and when I am out of sorts I always feel low-spirited."

Lord Norman looked at her sharply, and saw that she looked very pale.

"Poor little thing!" he said, impulsively, "would you like to see a doctor?"

"There is no need for that. I dare say I shall be all right in the morning," said Iola.

"You generally have such good health," remarked Lord Norman, and he felt more interested in Iola than ever before.

This young girl had a wonderful influence over Lord Norman. If she had been a little older she would have known it, but, as it was, she was quite in ignorance of her power.

"I am usually in such good health that I don't quite understand being ill," said Iola, feeling strangely happy now that Lord Norman was at hand.

He was so very kind and considerate that evening. Lord Norman was still bending over Iola when Lady Norman and Rose entered the room. Rose Dudley betrayed no annoyance at finding Lord Norman and Iola together. She was too much of a woman of the world to allow her real feelings to be seen.

With the sweetest smile in the world she kissed Iola, hating her all the time in her heart.

Iola disliked being kissed by this woman, whom she knew to be false and deceitful. No sooner had Rose entered the room than she got Lord Norman interested in one of his pet schemes, and then Iola slipped up to bed. Her absence was not noticed until half-an-hour after she had quitted the room.

"Dear me, what a strange girl that Iola is!"

remarked Rose, as she put her eye-glass in her eye, and looked up at Lord Norman.

"Iola told me she was not very well to-night!" said Lord Norman.

"Not well!" said Lady Norman; "she generally has such very robust health. I always tell her she is like some great, strong, country girl!"

CHAPTER III.

WHEN Lord Norman asked Iola about her health on the following morning there was great anxiety in his voice.

Iola declared that she was in the best of health and spirits, and looked it too. She had made up her mind not to be so stupid as to be caught crying again.

"Do you know," said Lady Norman across the table, "that Rose has taken a great fancy to you, Iola? She did nothing but speak of you yesterday evening."

"It is very good of her, I am sure," said Iola, quickly, "to think of a humble person like me. Perhaps it is a pity I am not in distress, as Rose, being such a philanthropic person, would take such a keen delight in helping me. By-the-by, Lady Norman, has Rose always taken such an interest in the poor?"

"No, only lately," replied Lady Norman.

"Then there is no great wonder in her being so enthusiastic," observed Iola. "Do you really think now that her interest in doing good deeds will last?"

Lord Norman thought that Iola's remarks were ill-natured and uncalled for. Rose had done nothing to merit such remarks upon her conduct.

Seeing the look of displeasure that came over his face Iola regretted having spoken; but then Rose Dudley's charity did not seem at all genuine.

"If I was a person in distress," thought Iola, "she is the last person I should think of asking for assistance."

It was on that day that Iola met some one who had a great influence on her life. In the afternoon Lord Norman, Rose, Lady Norman, and Iola went to an artist's studio to see a wonderful picture that all London was talking about.

The artist's name was John Templeton. Directly his eyes fell upon Iola he was struck by her beauty. Iola could not help noticing the warmth of his glances, and felt greatly annoyed and confused. He kept his eyes so constantly upon her during their stay in the studio that Iola was really relieved when it was time to leave.

It is not difficult for a clever man who has made a great hit to get into the best society, and notwithstanding that John Templeton had risen from obscurity, he was received everywhere with open doors. He had been working very hard of late, and was glad of the change. Being a vain, conceited man he was naturally glad of the flattery he received.

Iola often met this gentleman both at her own home and out at other people's houses. She had not liked the man from the first, but for some reason Lady Norman contrived to get them together. John Templeton was objectionable in Iola's eyes; but of course the girl was not so rude as to let him see it. The artist, just because Iola was polite to him, seriously considered that the girl was in love with him. He was one of those absurd persons who believe themselves irresistible. He ought to have known better than this, considering the many snubs he had received in his life. There are some people in this world who never can learn from experience.

In time Iola became more amused than annoyed with John Templeton, and even listened to his wild and extravagant protestations of love. It was fun, after all, to have this lover, whom Iola was quite sure was not the kind of man to break his heart over any woman. He talked too fluently to be quite sincere, and had evidently had great experience in the art of making love. There was some excitement in having this fellow in attendance upon her, and it kept Iola from

dwelling too often on Lord Norman and making herself miserable.

John Templeton was one of those men who fall in love with a pretty face for the time being, and when the novelty wears off fly after a fresh beauty.

Lord Norman did not like to see Iola so often in the company of John Templeton. It is best to tell the truth, and to state at once that he was jealous. He did not like the idea of Iola throwing herself away on that artist fellow, and had half a mind to tell her so, but he did not do anything of the kind.

If Iola had known how bitterly jealous Lord Norman was, how gratified she would have been!

But he had kept his secret from her just as successfully as she had hidden hers from him, so they were both in ignorance of winning each other's love—as often happens in this world.

If Lord Norman had had the least suspicion of the truth he would have eagerly asked Iola to be his wife.

Somehow, Lord Norman could not fall in love with Rose, notwithstanding her goodness and chastity. It is never possible to guide the human heart, and all the affection he had to give had fallen upon Iola, who, he believed, only had a certain amount of friendship for him.

Iola little knew how Lord Norman suffered when he saw her talking to John Templeton. More than once he felt inclined to rush forward and violently assault the artist, and it was only a sense of duty restrained him.

Lord Norman felt angry with his mother for having asked John Templeton to the house, and told her so. "I cannot bear the fellow," he declared, and Lady Norman saw that he meant what he said.

"I invited him for dear Iola's sake," said Lady Norman, with a smile.

"For Iola's sake!" repeated Lord Norman, almost fiercely, and for the moment it seemed to him that his heart had stopped beating. "I don't understand you, mother!"

"Surely you must be blind!" said Lady Norman, with an air of superior wisdom. "I and Rose have seen it all along."

"Seen what?"

"That Iola is madly in love with John Templeton," observed Lady Norman. "Why, all the servants have noticed it, I am sure!"

Lord Norman said not another word, but it was clear to Lady Norman that he was quite upset at the news she had given him. He had even turned white to the lips, and was evidently suffering keenly. Iola had unintentionally brought sorrow upon him; but still he was glad they had met. Looking back, Iola seemed like a part of his own life. How dismal his home would seem without her. He hardly dared to think of it.

"I didn't think that this fellow Templeton was the kind of person she would like," observed Lord Norman, after a moment's reflection.

How he regretted having gone to the studio that Sunday afternoon! But for that, in all probability, John Templeton and Iola would never have met. He felt glad now that he had not told Iola of his love.

Rose came to fetch Lord Norman to go to some public meeting, the object of which was to raise money to help poor children to have a day in the country.

That night Rose's voice grated upon his ear, and he half doubted her sincerity. Great was her surprise when Lord Norman refused to go, making some very wild excuse.

"I am afraid you have quite offended Rose by your abruptness and rudeness," said Lady Norman, when the lady had gone.

"I had no intention of being rude," said Lord Norman, looking shocked, for he was too much of a gentleman to be guilty of any slight to a lady.

"You were rude, nevertheless."

"Then I'll apologise to Rose Dudley the next time I see her," observed Lord Norman. "I can't do anything more than that."

"She is sure to forgive you," was the reply, "for she is very fond of you."

"Do you think so?" said Lord Norman, some-

what alarmed. "This idea never occurred to me before, but I really think that you are right."

"I should so like to see you married and settled!" said Lady Norman, looking up at her son with all a mother's love and pride. "I don't think it right for a rich man of good family to be a bachelor. I don't think you could do better than marry Rose. You see your tastes are so very similar. Then, again, Rose is no longer a girl, and is of a sensible age. She is not giddy and thoughtless, like Iola, for instance."

Lord Norman could not help thinking that Rose was not to be compared with Iola in any way, but he discreetly kept his thoughts to himself.

That night he met Iola in the hall, and she seemed to avoid him, and this made Lord Norman very wretched, for if she was in love with Templeton there was no need for her to treat him in such a manner. He was deserving of some sympathy at her hands.

"One moment, Iola," he said, quickly, and the girl turned round and came back to where he was standing, and looked at him inquiringly, but never spoke one word. She looked strangely embarrassed, he thought.

"I have only called you back to tell you," remarked Lord Norman, speaking in a stiff, constrained manner, "that I'll not oppose your wishes in any way. Good-night, Iola. I hope you'll be very happy, but I really do think you might have made a better choice."

The girl looked at Lord Norman in the greatest surprise, and then quickly vanished.

As she shut her bedroom door there was an expression of infinite wonder on her face. Was Lord Norman laughing at her? No, it could not be that, for he had looked so very grave.

After Lord Norman's refusal to accompany her Rose Dudley did not put in appearance for two days. She did not wish him to think that she would put up with anything he might do or say. He thought that the lady was rather unreasonable, but he apologised all the same.

Having made the discovery, as he thought, of Iola's love for Templeton, Lord Norman could scarcely take any interest in things that usually interested him. He even felt inclined to throw up his many benevolent schemes in disgust; but a strong sense of duty at length prevailed, and he resolved to continue in his good work.

It is difficult to say who suffered most at that time—Iola or Lord Norman. They were both certainly very unhappy, and seemed quite ill at ease in each other's presence. They kept their secret well, however.

Templeton, although a clever artist, was a man of very inclinations, and it occurred to him that if he married Iola he would be doing a very wise thing. She was Lord Norman's adopted daughter, and, of course, Lord Norman would provide for her.

It never entered into Templeton's head that Iola would refuse him, for he had a very great opinion of himself. It was his idea that his appearance and his manner were irresistible.

"I will propose this very night," thought Templeton, as he jumped into a cab. He was in the best of spirits, and felt more than usual confidence in himself. He fell into a deep fit of abstraction, but the sudden stopping of the cab recalled him to life.

His disappointment was great when on entering the reception room he found only Lady Norman. She was very gracious to him, and this flattered the artist, but he did nothing but wonder where Iola could be. He did not like to ask about her, for fear Lady Norman might see how anxious he was. The lady was of keen perception, however, and read what was passing in his mind.

"I hope you will excuse me, Mr. Templeton," she said, rising from her chair, "but I have promised to visit Lady Westbrough, and my carriage is waiting for me."

"Lady Norman, I hope I have not detained you," said Templeton, taking up his hat. "I only just called in while passing."

"Would you not like to see Iola before you go?" asked Lady Norman, looking at him keenly.

"I—!" began Templeton.

"You'll find Iola in the garden," said Lady Norman; then added, in a significant voice, "and quite alone! I have no doubt that she will be pleased to see you!"

Lady Norman quitted the room by the door, and at the same time Templeton passed out through the window.

Iola was in her favourite corner in the garden, and on hearing the sound of footsteps looked up sharply. A look of annoyance came to her face on seeing Templeton. She was growing tired of his attentions. No sensible woman likes a coquet man. She was just in the humour to be alone, and did not feel inclined to talk at all. The day was a hot one, and she felt languid and quite indisposed to listen to Templeton's nonsense.

It was the very worst time he could have chosen to make a proposal of marriage, but Templeton did not know this. Although Iola greeted him with the conventional society smile he might have noticed the look of annoyance on her face that she vainly tried to repress.

"Lady Norman told me I should find you here," said Templeton, sitting down beside Iola quite uninvited.

"I suppose she was bored by him, and therefore sent him to me," thought Iola. "It is very kind of her, I am sure. Why couldn't she say I was out? She knows perfectly well I did not want to be bothered with him!"

"I came here because I like to be quiet," said Iola; but Templeton did not take the hint.

"You are fortunate to have such a green, shady garden in London," said Templeton, not feeling quite so confident as he did a moment ago. There was something in the girl's manner that disconcerted him. There was an interval of silence, and then Templeton continued, "I am pleased to find you quite alone, Miss Day."

"Why?" asked Iola, who was leaning back lazily in her chair, with half-closed eyes.

"Because I have something of importance to say to you," said Templeton, drawing his chair nearer to hers. "It depends upon you, Iola, whether I am to be the happiest or the most miserable of men."

"You have no right to call me Iola!" said the girl, haughtily. "I only allow my most intimate friends to call me that, Mr. Templeton."

The artist's embarrassment was really painful to witness. Knowing he had made a blunder, he racked his brain to find some way of repairing it. Before he had said a dozen words he had managed to offend Iola. It was certainly a bad beginning.

Templeton was furious with himself.

"I am losing my wits," he told himself.

"I am sorry I gave you offence Miss Day," he said, "and trust you'll forgive me."

Iola was in a very mischievous humour that day, and enjoyed the artist's evident embarrassment. She almost guessed what he had come to tell her, and even took pleasure in tormenting him.

"I will certainly overlook it this time," she said.

"You make it very hard for me to speak," cried Templeton, "but I must do so all the same. I can endure suspense no longer, and must tell you my feelings in regard to you. To-day I lose or win all. From the first moment my eyes fell upon you I was captivated with your loveliness, and it was not long before you stole my heart. Oh! give me only the faintest hope of my winning you—one little word of encouragement—and you will make me the happiest of men."

"I can give you no hope," replied Iola. "If you love me as you say you do, I am sorry for you, but it is not in my power to care for you."

Before she could prevent it he took her resting hand in his, and made one more wild appeal for her love.

"If you could only know the strength of my love, the extent of my devotion, you would never send me away. Have some pity for one whose only offence is loving you too dearly."

"Release my hand instantly!" said Iola, in angry tones, for she saw Lord Norman coming

towards them, and did not wish him to think that Templeton was her lover.

Templeton still retained her hand, in spite of all her struggles, and Lord Norman turned back into the house under the impression that Iola was in love with the artist. Lord Norman went into the library, not wishing anyone to see his ghostly face.

"Say that you will have mercy upon me," continued Templeton. "One unkind word from your lips would drive me to despair."

With a violent effort Iola released her hand, then rising to her feet looked at him scornfully.

"Your conduct has been beneath contempt!" she said, when she could get her breath. "I both hate and despise you."

The unkind word had been spoken, but still Templeton did not look quite like a despairing man, but he looked like a mortified one. At first he looked at Iola in the greatest surprise, then an angry flush came into his face, and he became absolutely brutal.

"I wonder you are so proud!" he cried, looking at Iola, vindictively. "You ought to remember that Lord Norman picked you out of the gutter, and has only adopted you out of charity."

Templeton had shown himself in his true light now, and Iola was glad she had not given her heart into his keeping. To be married to such a man could only bring degradation upon any woman.

He had proved himself a scoundrel by his own words; but what did he care since he had no object to serve in hiding his mean nature!

"The words that come from such lips as yours have no power to wound me," said Iola, raising herself to her full height, and giving him a keen glance that he could not meet. "I have only to tell Lord Norman, and he would chastise you for your cowardice—your insolence; but you are too despicable to be taken any notice of. If all men were like you, Heaven help the women!"

Iola turned away, leaving Templeton standing as if transfixed, as pale as death; the perspiration trickled down from his hair to his temples, and his hands actually trembled. Her words had stung him, for he knew that they were well deserved.

After giving one glance at Iola, Templeton passed out of a back gate, for he did not care to return to the house.

CHAPTER IV.

LORD NORMAN was firmly convinced that Iola had become engaged to Templeton, or she would not have allowed him to hold her hand in that way.

Lord Norman knew he was unjust, but he could not help feeling angry with Iola—unreasonably and jealously angry.

There was no earthly reason why Iola should not fall in love with Templeton, but, somehow or other, he distrusted the man. He would have liked her to marry any person better than Templeton. He and the artist had never been good friends from the first.

Although Lord Norman disapproved of Iola's marriage with Templeton, he at once made up his mind to give her a handsome income. If Iola had not such an obstinate nature he would have warned her against Templeton, but he thought it would be useless to do so. As the girl had chosen for herself, without consulting him, she must take her chance of being happy in the future.

Iola's supposed engagement with Templeton brought good fortune to Rose, for, seeing he had lost Iola, Lord Norman made up his mind to ask her to be his wife. He did this on the very first opportunity, and, used we say, was eagerly accepted.

It was not very long before Lord Norman regretted having taken this ill-advised step, but then, unfortunately, it was too late to draw back. It would have been dishonourable to do so, and Lord Norman had never been guilty of an un-

worthy act yet, and made up his mind that he never would.

One evening Iola came in the library for a book, and found Lord Norman there. The book was on a high shelf so he reached it for her, and then he handed her a chair and began talking to her.

"I have something to tell you that will surprise you," said Lord Norman, looking as awkward as a bashful schoolboy for the first time in his life.

"Have you, Lord Norman?" cried Iola. "What in the world can it be?"

"Well, I am engaged to be married to Rose Dudley!" observed Lord Norman.

If the room had not been in semi-darkness Lord Norman would have seen the effect his words had upon Iola. She became very pale, and her eyes had a sorrowful shade in them, and her face wore an expression of bitter pain.

How thankful she was that there was no light in the room, for she knew only too well that her face was bloodless. She felt that she must make some remark, and did so with difficulty.

"I hope you'll be very happy," she said, in a half-hesitating way, for she did not think that Rose was the kind of woman that Lord Norman should marry. She distrusted Rose just as much as Lord Norman distrusted Templeton.

"Well, I daresay I shall be as happy as most married people, Iola," said Lord Norman; then he added, after a moment's thought, "I think I have guessed your little secret."

Iola started, and the warm blush came back to her face. Surely he had not discovered her love for him, and was going to tell her of it!

"What secret?" asked Iola, in a scarcely audible voice.

"Why, I have discovered that you love Templeton!" said Lord Norman; "quite accidentally, however. Didn't I see you sitting hand in hand in the garden?"

"You have made a mistake," cried Iola, in indignant tones. "There is no one in the world that I despise like Templeton. I wish I could convey to you how much I loathe him. You saw him hold my hand, it is true, but he did so forcibly, and against my will."

A look of the greatest relief came into Lord Norman's face—relief mingled with regret. He was sorry that he had engaged to Rose now, and saw clearly the mistake he had made.

"If I had known the scoundrel was holding your hand against your will I'd have knocked him down!" said Lord Norman, fiercely.

"I am glad you didn't do that," remarked Iola, and then passed from the room. The servant had come to light the gas, and she did not wish Lord Norman to see her agitated face. She felt utterly wretched to think that Lord Norman was engaged to Rose.

The last thing Iola could recollect was rushing from the room. She went up the stairs slowly and deliberately. She had scarcely strength to throw herself upon the bed, when she fell into a kind of stupor that made her forget her unhappiness for the time being.

When Iola saw Rose for the first time after her engagement with Lord Norman, she was, to all appearance, smiling and happy. Rose, on the other hand, became more patronising than ever. Her intention was to get Iola turned from the house directly she was married to Lord Norman.

Lady Norman was more gracious than she had been to Iola now that there was no chance of her marrying Lord Norman. She was rather surprised at the sudden cessation of Templeton's visits, but did not question the girl.

Lord Norman regretted his engagement more and more every hour he lived, for he soon found out that Rose was not so good as she had pretended to be. His eyes were open, but still he would not break off his engagement.

It was his duty to marry Rose if it ruined his life. Rose was not worthy of Lord Norman, and Iola knew that he would never be happy with her.

There was no escape from the abyss he had fallen into. He saw now that Iola was a much better woman than Rose, for there was no hypocrisy about her.

About this time Lord Norman became very unwell. No one but Iola had noticed that he was growing thinner and paler day by day. But her loving eyes had detected the change at once, and she had even ventured to warn him that he was doing too much.

"I don't feel ill, only rather tired at times," said Lord Norman; "but I will work less hard to please you."

Then their confidential chats ended. It became clear to Iola that Rose did not like to see her talking to Lord Norman, so she avoided him on all occasions.

At length, the doctors ordered Lord Norman to Italy, not so much for change of air as to get him away from the scene of his labours.

Nothing would delight Rose more than a journey to Italy. There was just one reason why Lord Norman had been so ready to take the doctor's advice. He had hoped that—for a few weeks, at least—he would lose sight of Rose.

He was bound to marry her, but that was no reason why he should always have her near him before their marriage. Iola, too, felt dissatisfied when she heard that Rose was going with them.

Of course, Iola was very unreasonable to be annoyed at this, but it is impossible for people to control their feelings.

With rich people travelling is a very easy thing, and, having made up his mind to go, it was not very long before Lord Norman and his party were in Italy.

The first person whom Iola saw in Rome was Templeton. She passed him very close, and pretended not to see him.

"Have you and Templeton quarrelled?" asked Rose, who had noticed Iola pass him by as a stranger.

"Mr. Templeton is a clever man, but not a gentleman," replied Iola; "and I do not care about associating with him."

"You are very particular in the selection of your friends!" said Rose, sneeringly.

There was an angry retort upon Iola's lips, but then she suddenly remembered that Rose was Lord Norman's affianced wife and she checked herself.

Rose now always made herself as unpleasant as she could to Iola when Lord Norman was not in the way.

Iola often wished he could know how spiteful Rose was; but the woman was very cunning. Although she was engaged to Lord Norman she felt greatly afraid of Iola. She would not feel safe until she was married to Lord Norman, she told herself.

Iola had been thinking matters over of late. After some deliberation she had come to the conclusion that it would be better for her to be independent.

"When Lord Norman is married Rose will regard me as an interloper," she thought, so decided that, on returning to England, she would get a situation.

She knew well enough that she would find it very hard to earn her own living after the luxury she had enjoyed, but she would be more wretched still with Rose.

There was some little improvement in Lord Norman's health after he had been a few weeks in Italy; but time hung very heavily on his hands sometimes, and he grew very restless.

"I believe he will soon return to England again," remarked Lady Norman to Iola, and the girl agreed with her in this.

It was now Lord Norman's habit to leave the ladies in some out-of-the-way village while he took to tramping about by himself.

He was walking up a steep, dusty road one evening when half-a-dozen picturesquely-dressed men came up from behind some rocks. They were all well armed, and looked aggressively at Lord Norman.

One glance told Lord Norman that they were brigands, and in an instant his mind was made up. Without the slightest warning Lord Norman fired a pistol at the foremost brigand, whose body went rolling down the hill.

Angry cries came from the brigands, but, before they could cover Norman with their rifles he had bounded behind a rock. A narrow path led up

to it, and Lord Norman made up his mind to sell his life dearly.

If the brigands had been twice as numerous as they were it would have been just the same to Lord Norman—he would have shown fight.

It was not in his brave, courageous nature to surrender himself into the hands of these picturesque scoundrels, who were quite astonished at the promptness of Lord Norman's action.

Most persons thus attacked would have been panic-stricken, but Lord Norman had nerves of iron. Although he was not happy, and did not value his life much, he resolved to sell it as dearly as he could, so he waited, showing his white, glistening teeth, while the brigands hesitated below. They certainly had an ugly customer to deal with.

Now, if Lord Norman had surrendered himself into the hands of the brigands, they would not have hurt a hair of his head, knowing full well that they would receive a handsome ransom. Lord Norman knew this full well, but he did not think it right to encourage such scoundrels, so determined to fight it out. Only an Englishman or an American would have been so foolhardy.

The brigands gave a sharp and sudden cry, and then came scrambling up the path, hoping to take Lord Norman by surprise. He was ready for them, however, and then his pistol rang out, doing deadly, telling work. There was a heavy thud and the sound of retreating feet down the mountain.

Lord Norman was getting excited. There came a wild, cruel look into his steady, clear, grey eyes, and the lips were tightly clenched together. He looked upon the killing of the brigands as so much vermin got rid of. There was no compassion in his face when he heard the death-cry that had just escaped the man he had shot.

All became so still that at length Lord Norman grew impatient, and incautiously put his head out of the shelter of the rock. The brigands were evidently watching out sharply, for a bullet whizzed very near his head—too near, in fact, to be pleasant.

"A narrow escape" muttered Lord Norman.

Lord Norman was fairly convinced that he would never leave the spot alive, but congratulated himself that he had killed two of the brigands.

How long Lord Norman would have held out we cannot tell, but after firing another shot he made the discovery that he had no more bullets left. He had never contemplated meeting with brigands.

When the brigands made another attack upon him he made an attempt to defend himself with the stick he carried, but received a stunning blow from the butt-end of a gun, which laid him low.

The brigands did not find much money upon him, but they felt sure of a handsome ransom, and carried Lord Norman off to a place of security.

That same evening the ladies were waiting anxiously for Lord Norman's return, when a villainous-looking head appeared at the window, and a piece of paper was handed to Lady Norman.

"Lord Norman has been captured by brigands!" said Lady Norman, white with terror. "He will be killed!"

"Lord Norman is in no great danger," said Iola, quite coolly.

"No great danger!" repeated Lady Norman. "How can you say such a thing, you ungrateful girl! You don't seem to care a bit, although my son has been very kind to you."

As for Rose she began sobbing and crying, and appeared quite inconsolable. It was a well got-up piece of acting, and Iola saw through it at once.

"If you'll let me explain matters, you'll see that I am not ungrateful!" said Iola. "All those brigands want is a heavy ransom, so you see it is to their interest to take care of Lord Norman. We must go back to Rome as quickly as we can."

Seeing how she had wronged Iola, Lady Norman first apologized to her and then took her advice.

Half-an-hour after the visit of the brigand Lady Norman and her companion started for Rome.

A very short time elapsed, and then the money was sent to the brigands, and, of course, Lord Norman was released at once, and started there and then to join his mother.

It so happened that Lord Norman had to pass through towns in which the cholera was raging, and he was struck down at once.

At first, Lady Norman was surprised at his prolonged absence, then became uneasy, then finally alarmed. Evidently something serious had occurred to delay him in this way.

"I believe that Lord Norman has been taken ill in one of those unhealthy towns," said Iola.

"Oh, how dreadful!" cried Rose, beginning to cry. "Of course, we can't venture back into one of those cholera-infected towns. That is out of the question."

"Why can't we go back?" asked Iola.

"Because—because," stammered Rose, "it would be dangerous to do so, and at the risk of our lives."

"Then you think that we ought to desert Lord Norman?" said Iola, hardly able to hide her contempt for Rose's dodges.

Rose hardly knew what reply to make, but said, after a pause,—

"I have a horror of cholera, and dare not face it."

"I have a horror of it too," said Iola, gravely, "but would gladly risk death for any one I loved."

Rose, the good and charitable lady who had done so much for the poor in London at no risk to herself, had no idea of risking her life for the sake of the man she loved. It was more than could be expected of her, and she thought that Iola was talking quite unreasonably.

"I think you talk Quixotically," said Rose. "You may depend upon it, Lord Norman will pull through all right; he has a wonderful strong constitution."

"He is in a very weak state of health just now," observed Iola, who looked very pale and anxious; "and if he is left with strangers I don't know what will become of him."

"He has money," said Rose, "and will be sure to be treated well. Don't make the worst of things, if you please!"

"In such a time as this money will be of very little good," said Iola. "People are flying in a panic from infected neighbourhoods, and there are many thieves who are taking advantage of the state of affairs. There are riots in the streets, and even the doctors are attacked by the frantic people. The state of things is truly terrible!"

"And you wish me to go amongst scenes like these!" said Rose, indignantly.

Lady Norman was listening intently to the conversation of the two girls, and saw for the first time that Iola was the more sensible and the better-hearted.

"No, I will go!" said Iola, rising from her chair. "I owe Lord Norman a debt of gratitude which I will now try to repay."

"Yes," said Lady Norman, and Rose, in a breath.

"Yes," said the brave and energetic girl. "I'll start at once. Lord Norman may be in need of help even at this moment."

Rose gave Iola a glance of rage, but it was lost upon the devoted girl, who had no desire at that moment to quarrel. There was only room for one feeling in her heart, and that was that Lord Norman was in supreme danger. She could think of nothing else. Lady Norman quite began to love Iola, and now saw how she had misjudged her. The girl was worth her weight in gold. Who could compare her with the cunning shallow-hearted woman, Rose.

It is only in supreme and critical situations that we can find out people's real natures. It is when the storm comes on, in the great difficulties of life, that we find out the true-hearted.

For the moment Iola seemed older than her years. Lady Norman listened, and was guided by her. As for Rose, she could only look on and say nothing.

Iola knew that she had a most difficult

task before her, for she did not know where Lord Norman was, and would have to search for him.

Some people would have said that the girl was mad to start upon such a hopeless journey, but at all events there was method in her madness. Her dignified calmness, her wonderful will-power and resolution put confidence in Lady Norman's heart.

Lord Norman's valet was to accompany Iola. A fine, faithful fellow he was, who had been in Lord Norman's employment for some years, and who was regarded almost as a friend.

The valet was astonished when Iola's project was told to him, but he promised to take care of the girl, and Lady Norman knew him of old.

At an early hour on the following morning Iola and the faithful fellow started on their dangerous errand of mercy. Both had made up their minds to do what they had promised.

Lady Norman took Iola and kissed her again and again. She tried to speak, but her voice failed her, and she could only burst into tears. Rose shrank into a dark corner, feeling a little bit ashamed of herself.

She hated Iola more than ever for her heroism, and her only hope was that she would not meet with Lord Norman.

Rose would have liked Lord Norman to have died rather than be saved by Iola. It seemed to Rose that Iola was playing a desperate game for the sake of winning his money.

It is so natural for mean people to judge other people's motives by their own. Rose could not believe that it was pure love that made Iola go to the assistance of Lord Norman.

Lady Norman did nothing but praise Iola, and this drove Rose very nearly frantic.

"Way will she speak to me of her!" she cried, when alone. "I am sick of her very name. I hope to Heaven that she will catch the cholera and die, and that Lord Norman will return well and hearty. It seems to me that Iola is running a great risk. When so many are dying perhaps Heaven will take her."

CHAPTER V.

IOLA had never imagined anything so dreadful as the scenes she witnessed while searching for Lord Norman. The people in the towns she visited were perfectly panic-stricken, and those who had the means were hurrying away from the infected districts.

It was clear that Iola was considered mad in coming to a place that every one was leaving in such wild haste.

Men and women came and spoke to her and urged her to turn back, but she would not listen to them, even when she was told that she was going to certain death. Her coolness struck the excitable, panic-stricken people with amazement.

There were even riots in some towns, and the soldiery had to be called out to restore order. Poverty and death seemed to walk hand-in-hand, and the dirt and the squalor was something appalling.

At length, Lord Norman's valet grew frightened, and tried to persuade Iola to return to Rome; but she would not take his advice. He could leave her if he liked, she told him, but she must go on.

Her devotion hushed the valet, and he resolved to stay with Iola, whatever came of it. He could not be less courageous than a woman. Shame made him remain while fear urged him to retreat.

It was wearying work searching for Lord Norman, and sometimes Iola was discouraged by the hopelessness of the task, but she never once gave up.

Perhaps if Iola had had no object in view she would have been attacked by the disease; but having no time to think of her danger she kept wonderful health.

Iola made inquiries in a systematic way, and the valet was astonished at the girl's strength of will. Iola was even surprised at herself; but

she began to feel timidly anxious. Would she find Lord Norman only to be too late! This was the question she often asked herself.

She was never at rest, and her companion was afraid that she would bring on illness by her over activity. The heat was almost stifling, and the ground parched for want of rain.

Just when Iola had almost given up all hope of finding Lord Norman she discovered him in a small hotel, where he was lying in a dangerous state. All the waiters had left the hotel, and only the landlord and the landlady remained. They had just decided to send Lord Norman to the overcrowded hospital, when Iola appeared.

It was almost certain death to be taken there, for the doctors and nurses had a great deal too much to do; besides, the horror of such surroundings often produced fatal results.

Iola would not hear of his removal, and undertook to nurse him through his illness, with the assistance of the valet.

It would be tedious to describe Iola's anxiety and Lord Norman's sufferings, so we will not attempt to do so. Lord Norman was not suffering from cholera, but from a fever brought on through the privations he had suffered while in the hands of the brigands. The blow he had received from the butt of the gun had been a severe one, and for a time had affected his brain, so that he did not even recognise Iola.

It is sad to watch beside the bedside of one we love and not to be recognised. It made Iola's heart ache to see the unmeaning glances that Lord Norman cast round the room.

The doctor told Iola that Lord Norman's senses would return to him in time if he were taken care of. It was strange to Iola to find Lord Norman, who had always been so strong of will, now obeying her like a child. He seemed to have no will of his own, and to be quite helpless without her. The smallest thing would attract his attention, but he seemed to have no recollection of the past.

As soon as possible Iola took Lord Norman away from the hotel where he had first been taken ill. They travelled very slowly, but at length reached Rome, where Lady Norman and Rose were awaiting their arrival.

Lady Norman was shocked at the change that had come over her son, but she was none the less grateful to Iola. She had saved his life at the peril of her own. She thanked Iola over and over again, and Iola felt sufficiently rewarded for all the trouble she had taken.

Rose behaved in the most ungracious manner, never once expressing a grateful word for all the danger Iola had undergone. Her conduct to Iola was almost unladylike and quite offensive; but the girl did not care for this. Her heart had only room for one joyous feeling, for she had saved Lord Norman's life. She did not care whether he ever heard of her kindness or not.

Now that there was no danger to be apprehended from nursing Lord Norman Rose came forward, and Iola was not allowed to go near him. Lady Norman was quite disgusted at Rose's treatment of Iola, but as she was engaged to her son she did not like to say anything. She knew, too, that Iola would not like her to do so.

Rose was greatly annoyed at the way Lady Norman petted Iola. It was clear to Rose that Lady Norman liked Iola better than her. Her ladyship now regretted having persuaded Lord Norman to marry Rose, for she saw that Iola would make the better wife of the two. However, her foolish mistake could not be rectified now, and her son must marry Rose if he came back to his senses. Rose had not shown much anxiety during the time in which Iola had been in search of Lord Norman.

Her total want of feeling had made Lady Norman take a dislike to her. During the few weeks of uncertainty in regard to Lord Norman's fate Rose had been in the best of spirits, and had gone about amusing herself in the most heedless way. Lady Norman now regretted having brought about the engagement. It seemed to her she had done her son a great wrong.

Lord Norman was taken back to England to

his home in the country in hopes that familiar scenes and familiar faces would arouse him from the strange apathy into which he had fallen. It seems so much more sad for a man of brilliant intellect to lose his senses than a person who has no great capacity.

It brought tears into Iola's eyes to see him thus, and she often wondered to herself if he would ever be the same again. It seemed impossible to Iola that Lord Norman would ever regain his senses.

Rose was anxious, too, that Lord Norman should have his senses again, for she wished to marry him and enjoy his money. There never could have been a more selfish woman than Rose, who seemed to think that the world was made on purpose for her.

At length there was a change for the better in Lord Norman—so at least the doctor declared, although no one else could see it; but a few days after the doctor made the announcement everyone saw the change in Lord Norman.

When Rose saw that Lord Norman would soon be himself again she took good care to always be with him, in order that he should believe her to be a true and devoted woman.

Her great fear was lest he should be told of Iola's patient search for him in those unhealthy Italian towns. She knew Lord Norman's nature well enough to guess how grateful he would be to Iola for the service she had rendered him. There was one thing that afforded Iola satisfaction. The doctor had strictly forbidden anyone in the event of Lord Norman coming to himself to mention anything in connection with his illness.

It pained Iola very much to be kept away from Lord Norman. When there had been danger she had been allowed to serve him, now there was no danger she was kept right away from him.

When Lord Norman came to himself the first person he saw was Rose, who was at needlework near the window. Acting up to the instructions the doctor had given her, Rose manifested no surprise at the favourable change that had come over Lord Norman.

He looked round the room with a bewildered puzzled expression, evidently unable to make out the matter at all. He felt that there was a strange blank in his life, and tried hopelessly to think of all that had happened, but in vain.

The last time he remembered anything he had been in Italy. Now he was in England in his own country mansion.

Rose saw the struggle that was going on in Lord Norman's breast, but thought it wise to pretend not to do so.

Most men, placed in Lord Norman's position, would have asked for some explanation, but he did nothing of the kind. He kept very quiet, and made every endeavour to fill up the gap in his life, but was still unsuccessful. It was a sad spectacle to see him trying to recall all that had happened.

Lord Norman saw at once that something was wrong with him, but he decided to conceal this fact from everyone. No one should know that he had anything doubtful on his mind, so he waited for Rose to speak.

"Are you better?" asked Rose, in the softest voice she could assume.

"Much better, thanks," answered Lord Norman, keeping to his resolution of hiding his loss of memory from everyone.

"Oh, I am so glad to hear that," said Rose, taking his hand in hers in impulsive delight; "for you have been so dreadfully ill, and have frightened us all. I mean," she added, "Lady Norman and myself."

"It is strange how weak I have grown," cried Lord Norman; looking at his thin, white hands. "So you have been my kind, attentive nurse, Rose?"

"I have done all in my power to help you," said Rose, after a moment's hesitation, "and so has Lady Norman."

Never a word of Iola's devotion to Lord Norman. Rose ran the risk of telling a falsehood in order that Lord Norman should not know of the service Iola had rendered him.

Rose knew very well that he would never forgive her if he found out her great deceit.

The only thing was to get married as quickly as possible. When they were man and wife nothing could be altered.

"You don't know how grateful I am to you," said Lord Norman; but, although she had told him of the service she had rendered him, he was still far from loving her. He even felt angry with himself for the lack of warmth in his voice, and was afraid that she might notice it.

Lord Norman looked at her keenly, and, being an observant man, saw that she was in perfect health, and did not look like a woman who had been closely shut in a sick room. Her face had a healthy colour in it, and there was scarcely a trace of anxiety about her.

"We had a great deal of trouble getting you back from Italy," observed Rose; "but we thought you would like to be brought to your own home, and the doctors advised it."

Lord Norman had never been ill before in his life, and the allusions to his weakness irritated him. It seemed to him as though she talked to him as if he were a child.

To a man of Lord Norman's active mind and restless disposition, inactivity was simply torture. He could not understand being ill, and it was as much as he could do to stifle an impetuous exclamation.

"I wonder you took so much trouble," he said, rather sarcastically. "I assure you, Rose, that I am not worth it."

"How can you say such a thing!" cried Rose, in reproachful tones. "All the assistance I have rendered you has been a pleasure to me. I am sufficiently rewarded to see that you are growing stronger."

"Stronger!" cried Lord Norman, sitting up on the sofa. "Why, I feel as weak as a man can possibly be. It strikes me forcibly, Rose, that the cemetery is the proper place for me."

Rose put her hands before her face, and, to all appearances, had burst into tears. This made Lord Norman feel uncomfortable, and he scarcely knew what to say, so he was greatly relieved when his mother entered the room, for it relieved him from an awkward position.

"Norman is better," cried Rose, glancing up at Lady Norman, and the look of joy that came into Lady Norman's face is impossible to describe. It made her appear quite ten years younger just for a moment.

"I hope she will not say a word about that wretched Iola," thought Rose. "If she tells him of her search for him in Italy I am ruined."

She regretted now having concealed the service Iola had rendered him from Lord Norman, for she knew the light in which he would regard such a deliberate lie.

Lord Norman was such a truthful man himself that he expected truth in others, and Rose was frightened that he would find out her deceit.

"This is good news, indeed!" cried Lady Norman, and having the genuine ring of gladness in her voice; her son looked up with an affectionate glance.

Lady Norman was more tender and loving than she had ever been before. Since Lord Norman had been ill Lady Norman had been thinking over matters, and came to the conclusion that she had not been so kind to him as she ought to have been.

"Rose has been telling me of all the trouble I have been," said Lord Norman. "I am sure I am very grateful to her for her great kindness. It is very tedious watching by a sick bed night and day."

Lady Norman gave Rose a sharp, penetrating glance, that brought the colour into the woman's face. She understood the meaning of that glance only too well, and it was no wonder that the flush of shame had come upon her. Lady Norman plainly meant, "I see you have not mentioned Iola's self-sacrifice."

"I am afraid you exaggerate Rose's services," said Lady Norman, and she would have told Lord Norman of Iola's search for him in Italy, but for the doctor's warning that no allusion was to be made of things that had occurred during his illness.

So delighted was Iola when she heard of Lord

Norman's recovery that she made a rush for the room, but Rose placed a detaining hand on her arm.

"I don't think you had better see him now, dear," said Rose, who had a castlike gleam in her eyes. "The doctor says that he ought to be perfectly quiet. The least excitement might throw him back."

It was with the greatest difficulty that Iola could keep back her tears. It seemed very hard that she, who had saved Lord Norman's life, should be denied the pleasure of seeing him now that he was getting well. She had had all the anxiety, and now Rose stepped in and took the credit of everything. Can it be wondered at that Iola hated her?

Some women would have insisted upon seeing Lord Norman, but Iola was too proud to do that. She merely said,—

"I should be sorry to disturb Lord Norman, but will you tell him how pleased I am to hear of his recovery?"

Of course Rose did not give Iola's message to Lord Norman, or he would have asked to see her at once. As it was, he was quite hurt at her apparent indifference, and never mentioned her name.

Iola made up her mind that she would never go near Lord Norman if she could help it. When she saw him in the garden leaning on Rose's arm she slipped away to her own room, and would watch him from the window.

Day by day Lord Norman grew stronger, and at last could dispense with Rose's assistance. This pleased him very much, for he did not like being dependent on anyone.

One evening he was taking a stroll all by himself when he came upon Iola.

She was reading, and was ignorant of his approach, or she would have run away. As it was, he was standing near her when she looked up.

"It is a long time since I have seen you, Iola," he said, as Iola rose to her feet in the utmost confusion.

It seemed to Lord Norman that the girl was almost frightened of him, and this pained him considerably. It seemed more like fear than indifference. Seeing that she made no attempt to speak, he continued,—

"And I don't think I should have seen you now, had I not caught you by surprise. You are not looking so well as you did, Iola!"

If he had known all she had gone through for his sake—the sleepless nights and keen anxiety—he would have understood the reason of her pale face. Most women would have told him of the services rendered in hopes of winning gratitude and love, but Iola was not a girl to parade her great deeds before the world. She left such women as Rose to do that.

"I have shared the general anxiety about you," cried Iola.

"And yet you have not taken the trouble to come and see me!" said Lord Norman, in reproachful tones.

"Rose told me that you must not be disturbed," said Iola—she was obliged to say this in self-defence—"or I should have come on hearing of your recovery."

"Rose ought to have known that I should have been only too glad to see you!" said Lord Norman. "The sight of your face has done me a world of good already."

Iola flushed with pleasure as Lord Norman took her hand and pressed it warmly.

"Will you keep a secret if I confide in you?" almost whispered Lord Norman, as they sat side by side in the arbour; and not waiting for her to answer, he went on: "Do you know that I feel very ungrateful at times; but, notwithstanding Rose's kindness to me in nursing me through my illness, I like her less and less every day! Hark, Iola! here she comes!"

When Rose saw Iola and Lord Norman together she could scarcely conceal the look of anger that came over her face.

What if Iola had told Lord Norman of all that had occurred in Italy! How long had they been together! she wondered.

One glance at Lord Norman's face told her that Iola had refrained from speaking of the ser-

vices she had rendered him, and from that moment Rose regarded her rival as an idiot.

"A charming night!" said Rose; "but the wind is rather cold. Don't you think that you will catch cold, Norman?"

"I think there is more chance of Iola catching cold than I," said Lord Norman, "for I have on my greatcoat."

All three went into the house together.

After that evening Iola and Lord Norman met frequently at meal times. Lord Norman noticed with surprise that no allusion was ever made to Italy.

There was one person in the house who did not approve of the way affairs were going on at all. This individual was Lord Norman's valet.

He had been with Iola during her search for Lord Norman, and had come to the conclusion that she loved his master, and it was his desire that she should marry him. As for that "sleek-faced cat," as he very disrespectfully called Rose, he hated her.

After thinking over the matter he came to the conclusion that Lord Norman ought to be told of the service Iola had rendered him.

"If no one else will tell him I'll do it," he thought, "even if I risk losing my situation!"

No sooner had the valet come to this resolve when he hastened to carry it out. Of course, he had many opportunities of speaking to Lord Norman.

"Some women are like angels, my lord!" said the valet; "and had it not been for one of them you would not be alive now! When I think of the care that young lady took of you it brings tears into my eyes, that it does!"

"How devoted Rose has been to me!" thought Lord Norman, with a feeling of shame at his heart; "and yet I am unmanly enough to feel no gratitude!"

"Miss Rose Dudley was very good to me!" said Lord Norman.

(Continued on page 353)

HAD WE NEVER LOVED SO BLINDLY

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CHAPTER XXXI.

"You must take my arm," said Nesta Rivers, with a pretty air of protecting tenderness to Eastace Trevanion; "and you may lean on it as much as you like."

"I shall crush all your finery," looking down at the lace sleeves with its delicate trimmings. "Really your get-up is awfully jolly. It does credit to Eio's taste!"

"Yes; don't the Misses Willoughby look nice!" blushing, as she met his fervent glance of admiration, "Jenny especially."

"Yes, looks well for her, but not half so nice as somebody else; but then you never look anything else," he added, rather vaguely. This was the first time that he was to take his place at table since the accident. At the Abbey he had been promoted from his bed to a sofa, which was latterly wheeled at dinner-time into the octagon-room; but to-day he had insisted upon sitting at the wedding-breakfast like anybody else.

His thin, aristocratic face looked very delicate, but there was a flush upon his cheeks, a feverish light in his eyes, and Flora, in spite of her many preoccupations, cast anxious glances in his direction.

She looked very lovely, with all her white laces falling about her, and the diamonds which Sir Bull had given her gleaming in her hair; and Philip Fane, gazing at her with covetous eyes, could scarcely contain the passionate rage which possessed his heart. Basil had won the prize, but he was not safe yet. A marriage, however firmly tied by a dignitary of the church, can yet be undone by death or divorce.

The latter seemed the most unlikely of the two; but, to Philip's evil mind, not beyond the bounds of possibility. As he sat beside a Miss Fane, cousin of the bridegroom's, and in default of any near relation of the bride's, head-brides-

maid, it was only a short distance from Sir Basil.

With savage discontent he saw how all the harsher lines of his face had softened, how his dark eyes, usually so stern, beamed with happiness, how five years at least seemed to be taken off his age. He had won all along the line!

And then Philip leant back in his chair and reflected. With care and cunning and patience he had an idea that he could turn all this prosperity into object misery.

He saw his cousin watched, suspected and haunted down; he saw him driven from the arms of his young wife, turned out of his splendid home at Greylands, dragged to prison and the dock! And then he, Philip Fane, would appear as the good genius; he would get pats conveyed to this cousin that he might end life with a certain amount of decency and not on the gallows.

And thus, having saved the family name from a disgrace that would live through the ages, he would seek out the lovely widow, and drawing her to his breast tell her that one Fane had brought her disgrace and dishonour, but another would bring her honour and happiness.

His heart swelled as he imagined the scene, her sweet eyes raised to his in wonder and doubt, his voice vibrating in passionate pleading. He could picture it all so plainly, and he was troubled by no pity for the suicide, no regret for his ruined life; both were merged in the satisfaction at finding himself master of Greylands, and the possible husband of the girl he dared to love.

He woke up from his dream with a start, to find Flora smiling into her husband's face. Sir Basil looking down at her with the new pride of possession, Eustace making love to Nesta Rivers under her mother's nose, Emily and Jane flirting with their respective cavaliers, and a general buzz of conversation going on, interrupted by bursts of happy laughter, and the popping of champagne corks.

He felt like a ghost present at a cheerful banquet; but Sir Basil's eye was upon him, and he knew that it was necessary for him to rouse himself.

"The Willoughbys have really decorated the room very prettily," said Miss Fane, patronisingly. "Do you know anything of those people?"

"I should like to know a good deal more," answered Philip, who disapproved of superficialness in anyone but himself; "the girls are not half bad, and the father's a good sort of fellow."

"You've known the bride, I suppose! She would really be pretty if she had a more decided colour."

"Too much decided in anything spoils a woman."

"Sir Basil seems to appreciate her!" with a little laugh.

"Yes, and the Queen approves of the Koh-i-noor."

"What do you mean by that!" eyeing him with some curiosity.

"I mean that perfection is always appreciated except by fools."

"And Lady Fane is perfection!" with a small cough.

"Yes, one woman amongst a thousand—that's the general opinion. I'm no judge."

"You seem to have studied the subject!"

"I seem to have eyes in my head, that's all," with a laugh that had more bitterness than joy.

"I believe Sir Basil cut you out!" she said, impressively, as if she had made a great discovery.

"You are mistaken. Matrimony is a luxury in which I can't indulge. So sorry, Amelia. You wouldn't thank me for throwing a pauper at your feet!"

"There was no question of myself," laughing and blushing.

"No question asked; but it might have been thought of," talking nonsense, in order to seem properly festive, whilst he stretched his ears to

listen to what Sir Basil was saying to Lady Rivers about his movements.

"Going to Paris! But that will be a desert now. Why not try further south! Have you ever been to Nice!"

"We have no time. We must be back for Eustace's sake," and the husband and wife exchanged a look which was gall and wormwood to the jealous eyes that watched.

Philip Fane leant forward and said, in a careless tone,—

"Ever been to Monte Carlo?"

Flora felt as if a dagger had gone through her heart, for she remembered that this was the question which Philip had wanted her to ask in order to see what effect it would produce.

She dared not look at her husband, but looked defiantly at Philip, who for once did not return her glance, for his eyes were fixed on his cousin.

There was a sudden flushing in Sir Basil's face, a quiver that was almost imperceptible; but if he felt anything he recovered himself immediately, and looking Philip straight in the face, he said, with a certain amount of haughtiness,—

"I should not care to take my wife to a haunt of gamblers."

Philip smiled as he leant back.

"Did you notice anything?" turning to Miss Fane.

"Only that Basil looked unnecessarily fierce."

"You did not remark the two evasions: 'Had he been to Nice!' 'There was no time to go there.' 'Had he been to Monte Carlo!' He would not take his wife to a haunt of gamblers. Now why couldn't he give a straightforward answer to both!" and Philip Fane looked as virtuously shocked as if it had never been his constant habit to evade the truth on all occasions, and to tell it only by accident.

"You must excuse a man for being rather egotist on his wedding-day," with a smile.

"Not a bit of it. He was startled, but he was all there. You won't catch Basil napping."

"But it is an old-fashioned idea to be ashamed of going to Monte Carlo—he could have no motive."

"You forget what happened there," with a significant glance.

"Ah! poor Sir Lucius! But, do you know, I could enjoy myself very well, notwithstanding!"

"He was a stranger to you. Perhaps you never saw him. Basil knows more about him than anyone else. There was some story about him and Mabel Fane. I think she thought herself married to him, and woke up one day to find it a mistake."

"Married to Basil!" in an awe-struck voice, and with wide open eyes.

"No, no; married to the other man. She was Basil's own sister."

"No wonder he looks so stern."

"She died, so he needn't look stern about her still."

"But that is a sort of thing one couldn't forget. Poor fellow! What a wretch Sir Lucius was!" her young heart full of genuine indignation.

"Poor Sir Lucius, rather. He was enjoying life to the full; money to spend on every whim, no conscience to trouble him, a stone for a heart, and a digestion that was never out of order. What more could a man want! And then in steps Nemesis, and with a most unnecessary bullet sends him to 'kingdom come.'"

"It was a just retribution. I haven't a doubt that remorse drove him to it, and he killed himself."

"There wasn't a grain of remorse in his composition. If he had murdered the girl I don't suppose he would have slept one whit the worse for it."

"Horrible!" with a shudder. "Why rake up such a dreadful story to-day!"

"Because Basil reminded me of it. Do you suppose he ever forgot it! Mabel was the apple of his eye, the loveliest girl that ever stepped, and it was awkward for her."

"But how did it happen! She could not think herself married, unless she really was. Do tell me!"

"Hush! the bride's health. I'll drink that in a bumper," standing up. "Long life and happiness, and (aside) may she be mine before my life is done!"

Nesta Rivers drank the toast, whilst her thoughts flew far away to India, where this day would be as a day of desolation to her brother through all the coming years, and her kindly heart grew sad.

"I must have that flower, please, whispered Eustace; 'this has been the best day of my life,' and he took a white rose from her fingers, which had fallen out of her bouquet.

"I hope you'll have a better," thinking that he was losing the sister whom he loved so much.

"If you hope it, perhaps I may."

"Oh! I shan't have anything to do with it," blushing rosy red.

"Listen, Miss Rivers," sinking his voice. "Do you know there is some hope I mayn't be a cripple after all?"

"I am so glad," lifting a pair of earnest blue eyes to his face, in which tears of sympathy were gathering.

"And then, if I'm no longer halt and maimed, you won't snub me!"

"I don't think that I ever did," her lashes drooping.

"If you did—if I thought you would—I shouldn't care to be cured."

"Oh, Mr. Trenton, how can you say so!"

And then there was a general move, and the bride hurried out of the room to put on her travelling-dress, whilst Nesta followed her with a fluttering heart, and Philip's eyes went after her to the door, with a passionate longing in them which he could scarcely repress. Thus amidst hopes, and fears, and wild regrets, Flora Fane embarked on the wide ocean of matrimony.

CHAPTER XXXII.

WAS it a dream! The last kisses were over, Mrs. Willoughby had cried over her as if she were really very sorry to lose her; the girls had sobbed as they embraced her, and said, "they would miss her awfully." And Eustace himself had put her into the carriage—very pale—without a word, but with a suspicious tremble about his lips, and a convulsive grip of his hand. White shoes—down at the heel and worn out at the toes—were thrown after them, and clouds of rice—the white grains lodging in the bundle of rugs, in the straps of the new portmanteau, and in every crevice where they could find a resting place—ready to betray to every one who passed by, as they alighted at Hardchester, that this was a bride and bridegroom off for their honeymoon.

Sir Basil did not say much on the way; the villagers were all standing at their gates, expecting bows and smiles; the tenant-farmers had formed themselves into a voluntary guard of honour; time for reflection there was none. At the station the cavalcade took off their hats and cheered, astonishing the townspeople who stopped to gaze and stare; and Sir Basil, after cordial thanks, hurried Flora into a train, with an Englishman's natural horror of a fuss. The sound of the cheering pursued them on to the platform, and then there was a loud clatter of horses' hoofs as the train moved out of the station.

"Thank Heaven, that's over," he said, with a fervent sigh as he threw a heap of society and other papers on the seat.

"It was very good of them to take the trouble," said Flora, softly.

"Yes, but they might have had more sense. I wonder Mitchell gave in to it; as if I wanted you to be stared at by all the gaping idiots of the place."

"It was you they were looking at. It was you they came for."

"Yes, of course. I'm worth looking at, am I not?"

She looked up at him shyly; he had taken off his frock coat and put on an ordinary suit of brown, and the colour seemed to accord very

well with his handsome bronzed face. To his young bride he was better, nobler-looking than any other man on earth. He met the admiration in her eyes, and his face softened at once, to wondrous tenderness. Without a word he stretched out his arms, and drew her towards him. There was no resistance; she was his now, his very own. He thought of that, as he bent over that lovely face, and kissed her lips. Her heart was in a flutter, blushing dyed her cheeks, but she rested in his arms with happy confidence, feeling here was her harbour of refuge where she could find shelter for herself and her brother from every storm. For Eustace's sake, she had given herself to him in the first overwhelming sense of embarrassment and hesitation, but now her whole heart went out to him on a wave of tenderness, and she felt all doubt was over; her best dreams were realised, her highest hopes had found fruition.

"You trust me, little one!"

"Now and always."

"You will never let Philip or any other man come between us!"

"Never! I hate him."

Sir Basil smiled, but his face was terribly earnest.

"He will try to make you doubt me—"

"But he won't succeed. And if he tries again I'll ask you to forbid him the house."

"Then he has begun already!" his eyes darkening.

"Yes, but I wouldn't listen to him. Don't be afraid, it won't make any difference. Oh! Basil," lifting up her face, and looking at him with impassioned eyes. "I trust you, as I trust Heaven!"

He drew a deep breath.

"Child, if you ever change, may Heaven in mercy let me die!"

"But I shan't change," annoyed at his parsimony. "The Abbey will fall down before I do."

"I am thankful to think the walls are thick—nearly three feet thick in some parts."

"You will learn some day when you know me better," with a slight assumption of dignity, "that they are not stronger than a woman's faith."

"It will be the joy of my life to learn it," he answered gravely, whilst his anxious heart felt at rest.

For the brief space of his honeymoon he put aside his own troubles, cast dull care behind him, and allowed himself to be happy. His youth had been blighted and nipped, but now it seemed to break into new life, and he threw himself into every pleasure with an abandon that delighted and surprised his young wife. Sometimes, when she had time for thought, which was not very often, she could scarcely believe he was the same man who had lain on the grass, half mad with secret trouble, and prayed her to hate him as the only chance of happiness for them both. What the reason was she could not guess; but it must have had some connection with Philip's insinuations. Perhaps Sir Basil had been under a false impression, and found out his mistake on the day that he made his offer. It was clear that the reason no longer existed, for he was the soul of honour, and would not have married her if there had been the slightest "cause or impediment" against it. Therefore she put away all idle speculations concerning it, and gave herself up to the happiness of the hour. The fashionable world was absent from Paris, but the streets seemed very bright to Flora's unsophisticated ideas; and lounging by her husband's side, in an elegant coupé, she was the cynosure of every dandy's eye, when she drove in the Bois de Boulogne.

There were one or two grand ladies still left who had known Sir Basil Fane when a bachelor, and were glad to take notice of his lovely English bride. They asked her to their houses, and took her to their private boxes at the theatre, proud to have such an attraction when the rest of society were feeling dull.

Any girl's head might have been turned by the amount of admiration that Flora received, but she was only amused at the impassioned glances of ardent young Counts, and kept them quietly

from going too far by a charming assumption of youthful dignity, and a smile that was sweet enough to heal every wound.

Sir Basil was not inclined to be jealous, for it was to him she turned with a sigh of relief when wearied with plying constant pretty speeches, and she clung to his arm on leaving a reception in preference to those who were offered by her eager admirers.

There were quiet happy days when they slipped away from their friends, and made expeditions to the historical haunts in the neighbourhood—places which Flora had often pictured to herself in the schoolroom at home, and wondered when she should see them with her own eyes. Wherever they went her husband had something to say out of his well-stored mind, but he did not bring it out like sentences from a guide-book, or as if he were giving instructions to a pupil. He would ask her if she remembered such and such an incident connected with the palace or the hunting-ledge, or the pleasure-ground, which they happened to be inspecting; and then he would conjure up the whole scene with a few simple words till Flora could see it like a picture.

Every day she grew to love him better, as she learnt the beauty of his character. He was unselfish in the small things of life as well as the great, generous and open-handed, yet not foolishly extravagant; exceedingly pitiful to those trampled under foot in the race of life, but stern and unbending to the trampler. His temper was never upset by a trifle. If Flora kept him waiting for dinner, she was never met with a cloud on his brow, only by a laughing remonstrance, and if she wanted to go to church when he had planned a drive he yielded at once, and said he would never come between her and her religion.

Even a darning letter from his cousin did not ruffle his equanimity. Philip complained that he was afraid of stirring from his chambers for fear of being served with a writ.

"How dreadful!" said Flora, to whom there was something quite tragic in the position.

"What can you do for him?"

"Send him a cheque—that's all he wants."

"And why is he so terribly poor?" her face full of sympathy, though the object to be pitied was not approved of.

"He has a fair income, but he won't take the trouble to make two ends meet. Perhaps he would be more careful if I weren't standing in the background. For every sovereign he takes out of his own pocket he remembers there are two in mine, and he doesn't forget to claim them when the bill comes in."

"It is a good thing to be rich!" with an air of reflection.

"Yes, but I never remembered to be grateful till just lately. I shouldn't have cared to bring you to Paris if I couldn't give you any little thing you fancied, or take you where you wanted to go."

"But I should have liked it just as well. That diamond swallow from the Rue de la Paix—it is very lovely, but I don't think it made me happier."

"I liked to see it in your hair, and so did the Count. Didn't he wish to borrow its wings and fly after you when you left?"

Flora laughed, amused at the recollection.

"He was very silly. When do you think we shall leave?" her face growing grave.

A shadow crossed his.

"So you are tired of it already?"

"Not a bit," eagerly. "I should never be tired of it, but Eustace isn't well."

"Anything serious?"

"He couldn't sleep, and Mrs. Willoughby says the pain in his side is worse."

"We will start to-morrow if you like."

"There's the dinner at the De Neuville's. Let us say the day after," knowing that he expected to meet some old friends, and that he had been looking forward to it with pleasure.

"Just as you like. We can send round to-day and say we are off."

"No, Madame de Neuville would never forgive us."

Sir Basil remonstrated, but Flora was firm. She had wisely resolved that Eustace Tre-

vanion should never be an obstacle in the way of her husband's wishes; and she stuck to her resolution bravely, though sorely tempted to break it.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AGAIN there was a triumphal arch over the park-gates, and this time there was nothing to mar its effect. Mr. Mitchell with his own hands had torn down the offensive placard, which everyone else had been afraid to touch; and the ghosts of murder and retribution were no longer allowed to hang about the bridegroom on his return from his honeymoon. When he saw the grey pillar without that hideous yellow paper he began to believe that a new life was really dawning for him. The ghosts of that troubled past had come back to him as soon as they reached Hardchester, and Flora's watchful eyes had noticed the shadow on his face, the sudden flagging of his spirits. Her little hand stole into his, and he smiled upon her, but the smile had lost its brightness. Some of it returned now, as he waved his hand to his tenants, and recognised here and there the face of a woman to whose tale of distress he had turned a friendly ear.

It was good to come home with a beloved wife by his side, and to meet a smile of welcome from every face on the road. Mrs. Madden was on the doorstep, making her best courtesy, but Flora's eye looked beyond her to vain for a slighter, taller figure with a face that had always been the sunshine of her life, at the top of it.

"No, my lady. Master Eustace he couldn't come. They said it was better that he should wait till he was stronger. How well your ladyship is looking to be sure!" looking up at the sweet face, framed in a Parisian bonnet, with admiring eyes. "Ah, one can see that Sir Basil—bless his heart!—has known how to take care of you."

Flora pressed her hand, and nodded pleasantly to the servants, who were drawn up on either side of the hall. She hoped they were all well, in her fresh young voice, but Sir Basil noticed that there was a ring of sadness in it, which he accounted for by Eustace's absence. It was a strange feeling to come back to the Abbey of Greylands, and know that she was no longer a guest, but its mistress. Perhaps she was oppressed by the idea, as she walked into the grand drawing-room with all its glass and gliding, with its far-famed painted panels, and the little knick-knacks which had cost half a fortune.

"Darling, aren't you satisfied?" as he heard a sigh.

"Oh, yes, only it seems too good for me, and Eustace isn't here, after all, and even Mr. Willoughby has failed."

"Listen!" as a burst of cheering came from the lawn, where she was being consumed in large quantities. "I don't think you can complain of your welcome. It was very wise of them to keep Eustace from all this unnecessary excitement. Remember, we want him to be in the prime condition when we take him to London."

"Yes, I know. I don't complain, only I was longing to see him."

"We will have the brougham out and drive over there after dinner if you like."

"Oh, thank you so much; that will be delightful, and we can take all our little presents with us," her heart swelling with gratitude, as she asked herself if anyone ever had such a husband as hers, always ready to gratify his wife's every whim.

The next moment the door was thrown open, and in came Mr. Willoughby, followed by Philip Fane.

"Jove! you gave us the slip," cried Philip.

"There we were both waiting for you at Hardchester, and might have been there till to-morrow if old Symonds hadn't come up to us with some remark about the beauty of the bride."

"So you see, we didn't mean to treat you badly after all," and Mr. Willoughby, having kissed her



LOUNGING IN AN ELEGANT COUPE, FLORA WAS THE Cynosure OF EVERY EYE.

affectionately on both cheeks, held Flora at arm's length in order to inspect her. "Pon my word, you do Sir Basil credit."

Flora looked so lovely as she laughed and blushed that Philip felt half wild.

"Let me have a chance," he said, gruffly; and as the solicitor reluctantly turned away, he took Flora's hand in both his own, devouring her with his eyes.

She shrank from their insolent admiration, and as her lashes drooped he murmured something about cousinly rights, and put his passionate lips to her cheek.

She started back indignantly, and Sir Basil stepped forward.

"Please remember, Philip, that my wife belongs to me alone."

"Don't I know it! Won't that hateful ring remind me! But I suppose you don't mean to keep her all to yourself? Why shouldn't I, a relation, have as good a right to kiss her as Mr. Willoughby, eh?"

"I stand in the place of a father, Mr. Fane, and the child has always been like one of my own," said the solicitor, with a tear twinkling in his eye, as he laid his hand on his ward's shoulder and gazed lovingly at her beautiful, flushed face.

"Well, and I am ready to regard her as my sister. Say, Lady Fane, will you be my own sister Flo?"

"Certainly not," as she placed herself by her husband's side. "I have one brother," with a side glance up into Sir Basil's face to show that she had not forgotten that he once called himself by that decorous title till it was merged in a nearer and a dearer one, "and most of my cousins are dead; so please remain my cousin, and if you will," with a slight bend of her head, and a smile that nearly upset his balance, "my good friend as well."

"Your friend, your servant, your slave!" with a mocking bow, and a strange glitter in his eyes.

That slight touch of her velvet cheek had

mounted to his head like too large a draught of champagne. He felt that he could scarcely answer for what he would say next, so turned away as if struck by a French guide-book which Sir Basil had just thrown upon the table.

There were so many questions to ask Mr. Willoughby that Flora quite forgot him, and Sir Basil left the room in order to speak to his steward.

Nothing disturbed the peace of the quartet who sat down to dinner. Philip had quite recovered himself, and took pains to be amusing.

Sir Basil could see that there was an undercurrent of bitterness in his chaff, but set it down to the fact that he was always making uncomfortable comparisons between himself and his more fortunate cousin.

The mere sight of Greylands raised his covetous desires, made him remember his own impecunious position and upset his temper.

Flora was in an anxious state of mind meanwhile, fearing lest the advent of these two guests should make it impossible for her to get down to her brother.

But Sir Basil came to her directly she had gone into the drawing-room, and told her that the brougham would be round in ten minutes, so she had better start first and he would follow as soon as politeness would permit.

She gave a little point at being deprived of his company, but hurried upstairs to collect the various presents. The best of all was the one for Eustace—a handsome travelling-bag, which she flattered herself would be very useful to him when he was able to move about like other people.

The moon was shining in calm splendour over the trees and the dewy glades, where the deer were hiding amongst the bracken as she drove through the park—a happy young wife, suspecting no evil, and looking forward to no misfortune.

As the carriage stopped for the gate to be

opened a figure darted forward and poked its head through the open window.

"Good evening, Lady Fane," said a voice, which she recognised at once, and which sent a chill through her blood. "You think you've done a fine thing in marrying a baronet, but before long you will be wearing a widow's weeds, and he'll be hanging on the gallows!"

James Carey shrieked out the last word as the footman pulled him down from the step, and the light fell on his haggard face with the evil gleam in his eyes.

"Beg pardon, my lady," said the footman, touching his hat, "but I never saw him or he shouldn't have spoke to you."

"Never mind; drive on," said Flora, faintly. "He must be mad!"

Yes, he must be mad—that was the only solution of the mystery. What connection could there be between the gallows and her husband!

(To be continued.)

CAYTON is the home of the largest spider in the world. This web-spinning monster lives in the most mountainous districts of that rugged island, and places his net, measuring from five to ten feet in diameter, across the chasms and fissures in rocks.

The natives of Gomera, one of the Canary Isles, converse with one another by whistling on their fingers. It is possible to understand a message a mile off. Each syllable of a word has its own peculiar sound. Gomera is cut up by a number of deep gorges which are not bridged over, and as it would otherwise be impossible for the inhabitants on separate sides of a glen to talk with one another without going a long way round to meet, they have hit upon the whistling device as the best means of communication. The neighbouring islands have no need of this kind of "speech."



ADRIENNE CAME OUT OF HER REVERIE VERY QUICKLY, AND AWOKE TO A SENSE OF HER DANGER.

THE MISTRESS OF LYNWOOD.

CHAPTER XIII.

TRUE to his promise, Lionel went over to the Hall on the morning following his conversation with Otho, and did not leave till evening, the interval being spent in roaming about the grounds and sundry games of tennis, in which Adrienne joined.

She could not play well yet, having only just commenced to learn, but she promised to be in time an excellent player—her sight was so keen, her movements were so quick and agile, that she seemed to have every requisite for mastering the game.

She was very bright and lively; and Sir Ralph, who stood by, watching while they played, declared it did him good to hear her merry laugh—he liked to see her enjoying herself, and to feel that he had been instrumental in bringing her happiness.

After luncheon he was called away to transact some business with his steward; and the three younger ones strolled out on the terrace, and from thence down the marble steps to the lawn, where Adrienne paused to gather a knot of rosebuds to place in her dress.

"You are fond of flowers, Lady Lynwood!" Lionel said, observing the action.

"Yes," she responded, simply. "I always think of Heaven as a place where flowers never fade."

Otho's lip curled a little contemptuously at the answer, but to Lionel the fancy seemed graceful enough.

"I had forgotten that I have a letter to write, which I want sent to the village in time for the afternoon post," observed the former, as if struck by a sudden thought. "Will you excuse me for a few minutes, Adrienne?"

"Certainly."

"I suppose I shall find you out here when I have finished my correspondence!"

"Oh, yes; the day is much too lovely to be spent indoors—at least, I think so," she added, with a glance at Lionel; "but I don't wish to compel Mr. Egerton to remain out if he prefers being in the house."

"Which is assuredly not the case," put in the young man, smiling. "I am as fond of the fresh air as you are, and nothing will give me greater pleasure than the privilege of being allowed to stay with you while Captain Lynwood writes his letter."

"You had better show Egerton the cascade in the shrubbery, Adrienne," said Otho, as he turned away. "It has been made since his departure from England, and he'll think it a great improvement."

Adrienne obeyed the suggestion, and led the way through a tangled labyrinth of shrubs to a more open space, where a miniature waterfall dashed itself into spray against the great stones that were piled up to intercept its progress.

It was very pretty just here, in the green hush of the noontide. Overhead the branches of the trees interlaced so thickly that the sunlight only pierced through in places, and fell tremulously on the moss below, while the heat and glare of the summer day were subdued to a cool greenness that was very refreshing.

Multitudes of ferns of every variety grew about, their fronds waving like long, graceful feathers, and foxgloves; and other wild flowers were equally plentiful.

"Is it not pretty?" Adrienne said, as she seated herself on a rustic bench, and invited him to a place at her side. "If one had retained one's old belief in fairies and wood elves one would imagine this to be just the sort of place they would love to haunt."

"Yes," he answered, jestingly; "and who shall say they have vanished? For aught we know they may still dance about in their magic circles at midnight, and hide away in the bells of foxgloves, or under the toadstools, in the day-time. This is a prosaic age, certainly; but I don't see why, when we are in the country, and

away from this terrible civilization which is such an enemy to poetry, we should not indulge in the old myths once more."

"They were certainly very charming," said Adrienne, musingly. "Imagine sitting here and then looking up to encounter the laughing eyes of a faun from amongst the leaves, or Undine rising slowly from the water, crowned with lilies! It almost makes one wish oneself back in the old days, when such beliefs were possible."

"The poetry of which their form was the embodiment is still with us, only it has taken a different shape."

She shook her head dissentingly.

"I don't think so. I used to once, but now it seems to me poetry is dead."

He looked at her keenly—what did the confession mean on her lips?

"They say poetry and happiness never go together," he observed, and she caught eagerly at the suggestion.

"I should imagine it is true. I used to feel much more poetic in my little garret at Brussels than I do here, but for all that I am much happier now."

"I am glad—very glad you are happy."

"How could I be otherwise?" she said, simply turning her lustrous eyes full upon him. "Everyone is so good to me, so kind—especially Sir Ralph and Otho."

"You like Captain Lynwood?"

A shadow of uneasiness came over her face.

"Yes—at least, I think I like him very much, but he impresses me strangely sometimes. I cannot explain how exactly, but I feel as if a cold wind were blowing over me, and chilling my heart. It sounds stupid, does it not? And more than that, it is ungrateful to speak of it, for he is kindness itself towards me."

Lionel did not speak for some time—as a matter of fact, he was lost in thought. He had fancied he knew Otho Lynwood's character pretty accurately, and he had imagined the officer's rage at his uncle's marriage would be unbounded—

Indeed, he never for a moment supposed that he would deign to set foot in Lynwood Hall again. But here he was, accepting his disinheritance with the most perfect grace, and instead of exhibiting animosity towards the woman who had supplanted him, treating her with uniform consideration—even affection.

It was strange, certainly, but Lionel supposed he must have misjudged his old school-fellow, or that the character of the latter had undergone some change.

Presently a slight sound made him look up, and he saw the object of his thoughts coming towards them, accompanied by Sir Ralph.

They stopped when they were a few paces off, and the soldier said laughingly,—

"Don't they look lovely, those two? They might be sitting for a picture of Straphon and Amaryllis."

Sir Ralph did not look particularly pleased at the comparison, but his brow cleared a little as he seated himself beside his wife.

"Have you been here long?" he inquired.

"Not very long—about half an hour I should think."

"But that is long," he said, the frown returning.

"Is it?" Adrienne said, innocently. "It did not seem so, the time passed so very quickly."

The Baronet rose rather hastily, and offered his arm, which she took, and they walked back towards the house, followed by the two young men.

"Have you had much boating this summer?" asked Lionel, breaking the pause that ensued.

"Not a great deal—I am not much of a waterman, you know. Adrienne was saying the other day how much she should like to learn to scull, and I was too modest to offer to teach her, as I was conscious of how very unscientific was my own method. You are a 'swell' on the water, aren't you?"

"I used to pull decently—you see, I had such excellent facilities for practising at King's Dene, as the river was so near at hand."

"Well, we have the same facilities here. You had better take Lady Lynwood out, and give her one or two lessons," said Otho, carelessly, and, of course, Egerton immediately professed his willingness to do so.

Accordingly the next day when he came to the Hall he found Adrienne dressed in a loose white flannel costume, and Otho busy with his fishing tackle.

"I'm sorry I can't come with you," said Sir Ralph, ruefully. "Unfortunately, there is a magistrates' meeting at W—, and I am bound to attend. Take care you don't get upset or come to grief in any way."

"You needn't be afraid, Sir Ralph," responded Lionel; "I'll be answerable for Lady Lynwood's safety."

"Richards has packed a hamper with provisions, so you'll be able to picnic on the island, and if the day fulfils its present promise it will be a lovely one."

The day did fulfil its promise, and a more exquisite one it would have been impossible to wish for. The River Dene wound through the Lynwood estate, after having passed King's Dene on its way, so they had not far to go to embark.

Sir Ralph had built a pretty little boathouse on the bank, and here a light and elegant-looking little skiff was launched, in which the trio seated themselves, Lionel taking the sculls and Otho steering, while Adrienne also sat in the stern, watching Egerton as he explained to her the science of managing a boat.

Presently they changed places, and she took the sculls in her pretty pink fingers, rolling her sleeves up, and thus displaying her rounded arms and dimpled elbows. She got on very well with her lesson; but it tired her, and she was soon glad to resume her old seat.

"Isn't this delightful?" she said, enthusiastically, as she leaned back, and looked round her with a deep sigh of pleasure. "I wish your sister had been with us, Mr. Egerton."

"Yes, I tried my best to persuade her to come, for I knew she would enjoy it; but she declined

on account of a bad headache. I fancy she has not recovered from that fainting fit she had the other night at your house."

"It was such a severe one," returned Adrienne, sympathetically. "I wonder what caused it."

"The heat of the room, I expect; at least, that is what she herself attributes it to. She says she went out on the terrace for the purpose of getting a little fresh air; but it was too late, the mischief was already done."

"When is she going to be married?" asked Otho.

Lionel's brow clouded.

"I don't know—nothing is settled yet."

"Do you know her fiancé?"

"No, never saw him; but I expect I shall next week, for he is coming down to King's Dene. I think it is his wish the wedding should take place without delay."

"Naturally," observed Otho, and the subject dropped.

They had luncheon on an island about three miles higher up the river than King's Dene, and when it was over Otho announced his intention of fishing.

"What shall you two do?" he inquired.

"I think I shall take Lady Lynwood to see the ruins of the old monastery; it is not very far—not more than a mile, I should think."

"Do so, by all means, and when you come back I hope I shall be able to show you, as the result of my industry, enough fish for breakfast to-morrow morning."

Adrienne thought that it was even pleasanter without Otho than with him. She did not put the thought into words, but it suggested itself involuntarily. Lionel seemed less reserved when they were alone, and they could talk more freely of the many tastes they shared in common, of books, and music, and art, besides which he had many stories to tell her of the adventures that had befallen him in the Far East, and she was never tired of listening.

He possessed the gift of word-painting in a singular degree, and spoke with a certain graphic eloquence that ran no risk of wearying his listener.

He was no egotist, and refrained as much as possible from mentioning his own exploits; but he could not always prevent this, and it became clear that his life for the last few years had been full of colour, of variety, and excitement.

"How nice it would be to be a man for a year or two," sighed Adrienne, half enviously, "and to go to the East, and see all the wonderful palaces, and those beautiful, luxuriant tropical forests."

"Yes," responded Lionel, smiling. "I think, in this world, men have by far the best of it; perhaps it will be made up for to your sex in the next."

"I don't know that that is so," said the young girl, inconsequently; "if men have a few advantages, they have often to go out into the world, and be roughly knocked about, while women are taken care of at home."

He laughed at this very naive definition of the relative positions of the sexes.

"And you like the idea of being taken care of?"

"Oh, yes. I am not strong-minded, you know, and I like to have someone stronger than myself to look up to. But do not let us talk any more," she added, leaning back on her cushions. "It is so beautiful here that I want to do nothing but just enjoy it."

The sun was high in the azure dome above, and poured his beams with boundless lavishness on the smiling earth. They were passing through fields golden with buttercups, or a scarlet bias of poppies, or silvered over with the white-and-yellow broidery of moon daisies, and every now and again they came upon a group of cattle, knee-deep in water, and looking with large, mild-eyed astonishment at the young man and young woman whose boat glided so swiftly past the forget-me-not fringed banks.

The water lilies were over, but their great, broad, cool leaves lay like green plates on the surface of the water, through which Adrienne was trailing her slim white fingers, and then holding them up, and letting the glittering drops drip through, with a childish enjoyment that made Lionel smile.

The excursion was to him very pleasant, and the day a red letter one in his calendar.

Why could not life be ever thus—why could he not always float onwards in the sunshine, with the beauties of the summer landscape about him, and a fair woman smiling opposite, whose eyes were bluer than either the skies above them or the forget-me-not flowers on the bank!

CHAPTER XIV.

MR. GILBERT FARQUHAR had a very fine town house, sumptuously furnished, and looking out on the park; but beyond this, he had offices in the City, where loans of fabulous amounts were negotiated, and where only a favoured few were admitted to his presence.

On the afternoon in question he was sitting there alone, leaning back in a very comfortable chair, and gazing through the smoky windows at the chimneys and roofs that constituted the view.

But it was not of the view he was meditating—his thoughts were away from hot, dusty London, at King's Dene, and it was with the beautiful daughter of the house that they were chiefly occupied.

He was as much in love with Nathalie as it was possible for him to be in love with anyone; which is to say, that her beauty had taken a vivid hold on his senses, and he felt that he would give half his fortune to make her his wife. Well, she would be his wife, and soon too, for he had resolved the marriage should take place without more delay than was possible, and that the day should be fixed the next time he saw her.

Suddenly, his meditations were interrupted by a knock at the door, and the entrance of a clerk.

"A lady wishes to see you, sir," he said, respectfully.

"A lady!" repeated Farquhar in surprise, and instantly his thoughts flew to Nathalie.

"Show her up immediately," he added, and stood waiting in breathless suspense until she appeared, when he sank down on his chair again, muttering an oath below his breath.

This was not Nathalie—it was a woman of shorter stature, and less graceful presence, dressed in a long tulle, and wearing a thick veil over her face, which she flung aside directly the clerk left the room. The countenance thus revealed was, or rather had been, handsome, for now it was worn and haggard, and the only beauty remaining lay in the large dark eyes, and the abundant black hair.

"You!" muttered Farquhar, by way of greeting, and to judge from his tone of voice, the visitor was not exactly a welcome one.

"Yes, Gilbert, it is I—Joyce. Have you nothing to say to me?" she asked, very wistfully, and she came and knelt at his side, looking up into his eyes, while her own softened by intense emotion. "Are you not glad to see me?"

This introduction seemed to surprise him considerably—he had evidently expected one of a very different nature, and the words that had been on his lips died away unuttered, as he saw it would be expedient to change the tone he had intended adopting towards her.

He raised her from her humble attitude, blessed her, and placed her on a chair near his own.

"Of course I am glad to see you, so long as you are reasonable; but I told you you were not to come to my office—I strongly object to having private and business affairs mingled."

"But I had no other chance of seeing you, for if I had gone to your chambers, I should have been refused admittance as I was once before, and I dared not risk it. Ah! Gilbert," she clasped her wasted hands together and looked into his face, with eyes that were as eloquent as words; "I can't tell you how I longed to see you—how I forgot all the past, and the cruel wrong you had done me, just for the desire to look in your face and hear your voice once again!"

Farquhar did not respond to this outburst, and pitiful as it was in the expression of a love that had survived shame and neglect, its only effect was to embarrass him.

"Yes, yes, Joyce; it is very good of you, I

know, but did I not tell you there must be an end of that sort of thing six months ago!" he said, a little impatiently, and taking up a ruler that lay on the table, and playing with it restlessly.

Her head sank on her bosom, the light dying out of her eyes.

"I know you did—you said words that were as cruel as an adder's sting, and that cut me like sharp knives, and if I had had a pistol in my hand at the time I should have shot you dead for saying them!" she muttered. "But since then my little baby has been born, and it has your eyes, Gilbert, and when I looked into them I forgot your cruelty, and only remembered that you had loved me once, and that, perhaps, in spite of what has passed, you would love me again, and make me your wife, for the sake of our boy."

She caught his hand and held it tightly, as if determined he should not escape her, but should hear all she had to say, while his eyebrows met together in a heavy frown across his forehead, and with his free hand he drummed against the table with the ebony ruler. He did not speak for a few minutes, and she pursued the advantage she fancied she had gained.

"Ah! Gilbert, you will marry me at last!" she exclaimed, her voice quivering with triumph; "you said you would when I consented to leave my home for you, and you will keep your promise. I will be such a good wife," she added, with piteous earnestness. "I will never do or say a thing to vex you—I will conquer my bad temper, and you shall never see me in a passion again—I—"

He made an imperative gesture for silence, which she obeyed, while every limb trembled with the excitement under which she had spoken. It was evident she was a woman of very nervous temperament, and entirely swayed by her emotions while they lasted—equally patent was the fact that this man had taken such a hold on her affections that she was utterly powerless to resist the impulse that made his presence a necessity to her, and which had driven her back to him after he had sent her away with cold looks and harsher words.

"I thought," he said, after a pause, and speaking with deliberation, "I thought the last time we met I told you that I was very willing to make you an allowance, but that all our former relations must come to an end. Nothing has happened since then to induce me to alter my decision."

"Yes! Something has happened," she interrupted, "my baby has been born—your son, Gilbert."

"I do not see how that affects the question, except that I am willing to increase the promised amount," he responded, coldly. "Listen to me, Joyce, and do not interrupt me until I have finished. It is quite impossible I can marry you—our relative positions forbid it."

"You did not say that when you were courting me!" she broke in passionately, and heedless of his caution; "you were willing enough to promise anything then!"

"Well, you see, I was, or fancied myself, in love with you; and one says a good deal one doesn't mean under those circumstances, and for the sake of a pretty face."

"Is it pretty no longer?"

"No," he assented, regarding her critically. "It is certainly very different from what it was, but I expect you have been crying, and making a fool of yourself generally, without remembering that tears wash away beauty—you'll be all right after a little while, and get your old looks back again—" he did not in the least believe it, but he thought it better to pacify her vanity, which his first admission might have wounded. "Now I want to come to a clear understanding with you so that there may be no mistake in future as there has been to-day. Firstly then, let me impress upon you the fact that you must not force yourself into my presence, for it is an impossibility that we can ever be more to each other than friends, and we shall not even be that unless you are reasonable. As I told you before, I am willing to make you an allowance—"

"Yes," she interrupted again, "you offered me money and I threw it back in your face."

"I know you did," he quietly acquiesced, "but since then you have had time for reflection, and I don't suppose you will be such a fool now."

"And do you think your gold will compensate for the loss of your affection?"

He shrugged his shoulders indifferently.

"I really cannot say, looking at it from my own point of view, but if I gave my own personal opinion, I should answer 'Yes!' The fact is, Joyce, I do not care for you any longer—it may be brutal to tell you this, but it is far better to speak plainly than to let you go on deceiving yourself—your vile temper and reproaches sweep away all the love I once bore you, and now, the only thing I am willing to do is to make you an allowance of a hundred and fifty pounds a year—a fortune to a woman of your station."

She rose up and faced him, her eyes flashing, her lips full of a fiery, impatient scorn, her attitudes instinct with defiance.

"And I tell you I will not accept it! Low as I have fallen, I have not come to such a depth as you would force me into, and while I have strength to work, I will never be beholden to you for a penny piece—me, or my boy. I came to you full of love that had outlasted shame and anguish, and had mastered even my own resolution; but I go away full of hate, and my only hope now is that I may sometime avenge my wrongs, and make you suffer as you have made me."

Saying which, she dropped her veil, and went out into the crowded streets, where she was soon lost to view in the busy throngs that were hurrying to and fro.

Farquhar sat still for a few minutes after she had left, and seemed to be pondering.

"I'm glad she is gone—she is a capricious, uncomfortable sort of woman, whom one is never sure of," he muttered to himself at length; "and I always had a queer fancy that she might do me some mischief, if she had a chance. Well, I made her a fair offer, and if she chooses to refuse it, it's her fault, not mine—I can't run after her, and implore her to accept the money, and as for all I was willing to treat her well, if she would have let me—it was all her infernal temper—"

Mr. Farquhar's meditations came to an abrupt conclusion, for he jumped up hastily, put on his hat and went out.

Was he trying to escape from that uncomfortable thing we call "conscience!"

CHAPTER XV.

"Do you think I have sufficiently profited by my lessons in sculling as to be able to manage a boat myself?" asked Adrienne one morning, as she and Ocho Lynwood strolled idly along towards the river.

"I should imagine so; you seem to have got on very rapidly."

"Then I think I shall take the *Water Lily* out for an hour or two; I am anxious to test my powers."

"Which is to say you are willing to dispense with my company!" laughed the young man.

"I did not mean that," said Lady Lynwood, blushing; "but I thought I heard you say you were going to be busy this morning."

"So I am—I ought to be writing letters at the present moment, in fact; but the temptation of a walk with you was too strong for me."

"Then I shall only be doing my duty by sending you back."

"At least let me start you on your expedition before I am banished," he said, and when they got to the boathouse he drew the *Water Lily* from her nook, and proceeded to arrange the cushions and make all arrangements for her occupant's comfort; then he helped Adrienne in and put the oarlocks ready for her use.

"Which way shall I go?" she asked, looking up at him with her lovely blue eyes, and whose innocent gaze his own shifted uneasily. "I have never been down the river yet, so perhaps I had better go up, as I know my way."

Ocho pulled his moustache, and seemed to

be lost in thought, while his eyes were fixed on the ground in a meditative manner that the triviality of the question to be decided hardly seemed to warrant.

"It seems quite a momentous issue," laughed Adrienne, who was in particularly good spirits—perhaps at the prospect of being alone, for solitude was a luxury seldom accorded her, and she enjoyed it in proportion to its novelty.

"I was only wondering which would be easier pulling for you," he responded, "and I think you will enjoy it better if you go down, for the current is not so strong here as it is higher up."

"But then, I don't know my way down, as I said before," she demurred.

"There is nothing to know—there are no backwaters for some distance, so you will float quite easily down the main stream, and it won't be such hard work for you coming back. Nevertheless, pray do as you like," he added, hastily, and with a slight smile; "perhaps if you go towards King's Dene you may meet Lionel Egerton on the bank."

Something in his tone made her look up in a quick, half-started manner, but he did not return her gaze, and she said at once,—

"I shall take your advice, and go on an exploring expedition in an unknown country. Meanwhile, pray for my safe return," laughing.

"That you may rest assured, I shall do," he responded, and Adrienne dipped her sculls into the water, and went floating down the stream, looking like a lovely incarnation of the spring in its fresh beauty.

Ocho watched her until she was out of sight, and then turned round, and walked slowly back towards the Hall, very thoughtfully pulling his moustache the while.

On the terrace outside the house he met Sir Ralph.

"I thought you had gone out with your steward," he observed, as he joined him.

"Yes; I went over some of the land with him, and told him what trees I wanted felled, but I didn't feel much inclination for walking, so I left him on the understanding that I should give him the rest of my instructions to-morrow," replied the Baronet.

"It is certainly rather warm for walking," Ocho remarked, absently.

"Where is Adrienne?" inquired Sir Ralph.

"I left her, not half an hour ago, down by the river. She wanted to be alone, so she banished me, and I obediently carried out her wishes."

Sir Ralph laughed.

"I think she contrives to have all her wishes gratified—at least, I do my best to fulfil them. You and she seem to get on very well together."

"We do, I am happy to say; but, really it would be almost an impossibility not to get on with her—she is so sweet and charming."

"I am, indeed, rejoiced to hear you say so," exclaimed his uncle, eagerly. "I was afraid," he added, in a more hesitating manner, "that perhaps you might have a prejudice against her—it would have been only natural if you had."

Ocho was silent a moment, then he looked up, and met Sir Ralph's gaze.

"I will be candid with you, and confess that you are right. I certainly did start with a prejudice against her, and, as you say, it was only natural; for, of course, in common with other people, could not respect a young girl who, we fancied, had married for the sake of money and a title"—he was looking fixedly at his uncle as he said this, and he saw the Baronet wince under his words, as if a sudden pain had caught him. "However, I am glad to say, my prejudice has vanished under the influence of her charms, and I acknowledge myself one of the most devoted of her slaves."

Sir Ralph did not speak for some time. He knew quite well what people had said regarding the motives which had actuated his young bride in her marriage, but, for all that, it was none the pleasant to hear them spoken of. He would fain have forgotten the difference in their ages, have persuaded himself that she forgot it too, and that her love for him was of the same nature as his for her, and it was not agreeable to be reminded of the extreme improbability of his

wishes. Perhaps he was in a slight degree irritated with his nephew, and this fact may have induced him to broach a subject which he felt Otho would hardly enjoy discussing.

"I am going to make my will," he said. "I never did it before, for if anything had happened to me you would have been my heir, and there was no one else to whom I desired to leave anything. As you seem to think Adrienne made a sacrifice in marrying me, it is only just that she should be amply compensated for it when she becomes a widow," he added, with a touch of satire in his voice. "I earnestly hope Heaven will bless us with children, and in that case my eldest son will, of course, inherit the title and all my landed property—not that I shall forget you, Otho. It is my intention to leave you the sum of thirty thousand pounds, which will bring you in a very decent annual income, and enable you to live as a gentleman; while, if I have no son, the title will go to you, and certain estates with it, but I shall leave Lynwood Hall to Adrienne for her life, and also give her a life-interest in the lands belonging to it."

Otho did not immediately reply, but kept his eyes fixed on the ground, and after a slight pause, Sir Ralph said,—

"What do you think of my testamentary intentions?"

"I think they are extremely fair—even generous, so far as I am concerned," he replied, slowly; "but you have always proved yourself so liberal towards me that I felt sure you would continue to be so. Nevertheless, I thank you very heartily."

The Baronet involuntarily breathed a sigh of relief. He had wished his nephew to know in what terms he proposed making his will, but had hitherto refrained from mentioning the subject, as he intuitively felt it could scarcely prove a pleasant one for the man who had for so long regarded himself as his heir.

"Ah! there is Egerton coming up the avenue," he said, glad to change the conversation.

"He seems to have taken a great fancy to Lynwood Hall of late," observed the officer, with a sneer he was unable to repress; "he is here nearly every day."

"It is at your invitation," retorted the Baronet, sharply.

Otho shrugged his shoulders.

"It was at first, but now he has become so entirely an *ami de la maison* that he does not wait for an invitation."

"He is quite right. Formalities between such near neighbours and old friends as the Egertons and myself are absurd, and I am delighted to see them dispensed with."

"Oh! of course, I quite agree with you. Besides, Lionel Egerton would be an acquisition anywhere—he is so handsome, and genial, and an athlete into the bargain. Adrienne owes her skill at tennis and boating entirely to his instruction. He will be disappointed not to find her at home."

If he were he did not say so, for after inquiring how she was, he did not mention her name again, but announced some message from his father as the reason of his visit; and presently Otho withdrew into the library.

Once he felt himself alone, the feelings he had been careful to repress in his uncle's presence found vent, and a change that was perfectly marvellous in its rapidity came over his face, the stereotyped smile he had formerly worn giving place to an expression of most deadly hatred and malignity.

He seated himself in a chair, but his excitement would not allow him to remain there, and presently he got up, and paced swiftly up and down the room.

"Fool, idiot that he is to imagine I should be content with a paltry thirty thousand pounds while she has the estates," he muttered, half audibly; "I, who have always looked upon myself as her prospective master; I, who, by every law of justice, should be their master, to consent to this bit of a girl having them! It is abominable, monstrous!"

For some time his agitation prevented his thinking calmly, but after awhile he made a great

effort to obtain his self-possession, and partly succeeded.

He resumed his seat in front of the library table, and mentally went over all Sir Ralph had said during their interview.

Briefly, it resolved itself into this: If the Baronet had children, as it was probable enough he would, all Otho could expect would be the thirty thousand pounds; and if he died childless, then the title would go to the young man, and those estates that went with it. These latter were very few, producing at most an income of about three thousand a-year, and did not include Lynwood Hall, which was to belong to Adrienne for life.

"Which means that I shall never have it," he muttered, savagely. "Besides, being more than ten years younger than I am, her constitution is superb, and, barring accidents, she will probably live to be an old woman, while I shall certainly not reach the age of three score and ten years—I have not taken enough care of myself for that—so that unless she dies without children I must make up my mind to letting Lynwood Hall go from me. Thirty thousand pounds! I wonder how far that would go with my creditors. If they only knew my kind uncle's intentions, they would be down on me like a flock of ravens, wolves, eager for their prey."

He smiled grimly at the thought, and continued his meditations.

"My only security lies in her death, and stranger things have happened than that a girl of eighteen should die—life is uncertain at the best of times, as we all know. Suppose"—a strange smile hovered on his lips—"suppose, for instance, she should be brought in this very evening, drowned—how odd it would be, and yet how natural! She goes out in a boat alone, on a part of the river that is known to be dangerous, and with a very imperfect knowledge of rowing, and an inability to swim a stroke; something touches the little skiff, and it upsets, leaving her struggling in the water; it is a lonely place, no help is near, and my lady is drowned. The story has been acted over and over again, and another repetition could hardly occasion surprise. People would sigh, and say it was sad, and Adrienne, Lady Lynwood, would lie in the vault with her husband's ancestors, while I should resume my old position as her husband's heir."

CHAPTER XVI.

No thought of possible harm entered Adrienne's head as she floated down the stream, on whose surface the broad lily leaves lay, and in which the willows on the margin mirrored themselves as their long tresses drooped gracefully downwards until they touched the water.

Otho had not been far out in his suggestion of her wish to banish him, for as a matter of fact, she infinitely preferred her own society to his on that particular morning. Witty and amusing as he was, there were yet certain chords in his nature that jarred upon her, and of late, she had had a great deal of his company, for he had been constantly at her side.

There was no need for her to row, for the current was strong enough to carry her along as fast as she wished to do so, so she let the sculls lie idly in the rowlocks, and drifted quietly down watching the oiler-fringed banks slide past, and catching sight, every now and then, of a smooth, brown body, and a pair of bright eyes, amongst the rushes—a rat reconnoitring, and scudding swiftly back to his hole as he found his privacy invaded.

She was thinking what a change these few last months had wrought in her destiny, and telling herself how good and kind Sir Ralph was to her, and how fortunate she had been to find such a protector. If she had not been befriended by him, she would have had to drudge on through life as a governess—there would have been no youth, no hope, no brightness, in such a fate, and he had rescued her from it, and given her all that luxurious wealth could procure, added to an untiring devotion.

If she had been more given to introspection,

she might have wondered at the peculiar insistence with which she repeated to herself all Sir Ralph had done for her, as if she would force herself to be grateful, and compel a love that would not come spontaneously; but—young, and innocent as she was—she was only conscious of a vague uneasiness—a regret not only that she could not sufficiently repay her husband's devotion, but that she did not even give him as much as was in her power.

Brought face to face with her own sensations, she was bound to confess that she was not thoroughly happy—that she was not even as happy as she had been on the borders of the Mediterranean, when she and Sir Ralph were alone; and yet, for all that, she felt older, and more fully capable of appreciating happiness in the abstract; she was developing in every way, and a deeper comprehension of life, and its manifold joys and sorrows, had taken possession of her.

Perhaps this latter fact was due to her intercourse with Lionel Egerton, whose ideas and opinions so entirely coincided with her own, and in whose society she felt more thoroughly at home than she had ever felt with anyone else—even her own father.

"I wonder how it is," she mused, as she drifted down in the solitude and glory of the summer morning, whose stillness was only broken by the songs of the birds, or the occasional lowing of cattle.

"Even the first day I spoke to him, I did not feel at all as if he were a stranger, and now I have a sort of idea, sometimes, that he understands my thoughts even before they are uttered. I am never afraid of telling him what I feel."

This was true, and many dim poetic fancies, that she had carefully hidden away in the inmost recesses of her maiden soul, had come to light under the influence of Lionel's sympathy—she was so sure he would never laugh at her as "romantic"—that he would comprehend her meaning, even though it were veiled in the vaguest of language—in point of fact there was a bond of union between them that both were conscious of, and that neither attempted to analyse.

She was thinking of him in a dreamy, meditative sort of way, as she had lately got into the habit of doing, when suddenly she became aware that the boat was drifting much faster than it had hitherto done, and that the current had grown a great deal stronger. The water, too, was less placid looking, and seemed to be hurrying impetuously forward.

Adrienne came out of her reverie very quickly and changed her seat—for up to the present she had been sitting in the stern with the steering-ropes over her shoulders.

Now she seized the sculls, and, by backing water, endeavoured to hold the boat up; but her efforts were useless, the current was too strong to be resisted, and she could not even guide her frail little skiff to the bank.

At the same moment a large board, with the word "Danger!" printed in big letters, attracted her attention, and a noise, as of rushing waters, sounded in her ears.

Involuntarily she dropped the sculls and looked round, and then she saw in front the stream foaming over a few stakes that were all the protection left against a weir, which, as a matter of fact—although she did not know it—was one of the most dangerous on the river.

But although she was unaware of its reputation she was not ignorant of the extent of her own peril, and a sudden deadly sickness fell upon her, making her brain whirl in a dizzy effort to prevent herself from fainting.

She looked hopelessly round and endeavoured to cry out and attract attention, but her voice deserted her, and she only made an inarticulate sound that ended in a low wail, as she slipped from her seat and crouched down in the bottom of the boat utterly inert and despairing.

A thousand thoughts flashed through her brain with lightning-like rapidity in those few awful moments. Must she die—she who was so young—on whose brow the roses of eighteen summers had not yet faded—she who ought to have revelled in life as a butterfly revels in the sunshine

Oh! the thought was awful, awful! and yet the doom hung over her, and no effort on her own part could prevent it, for her little skill would be instantly dashed to pieces in those foaming waters and she herself must drown!

A rapid phantasmagoria passed before her eyes. She saw herself at school in the Belgian capital—she saw Sir Ralph as he appeared before her on the first occasion of their meeting—she saw Othe Lywood with a smile that seemed to mock her—and then Lionel Egerton rose before her mental vision, and involuntarily she clasped her hands together and uttered his name.

"If he were here—if he were only here to save me!" broke from her white lips, in an anguish deeper than she had ever before experienced.

Life is so sweet to us—so sweet! Yes, even when clouds lower round us, and a dark veil shrouds the future in the impenetrable folds—how much more, then, when blue skies are above and the glory of youth's sunshine plays about our feet!

It is so hard to relinquish the hold we have on existence, and to realise the fact that in a few hours—in a few minutes—we shall have yielded it up, and the great world will go on "spinning down the groove of change;" but, so far as we are concerned, it will have come to an end.

The tide of life will ebb and flow as before, bearing on its bosom the weal or woe of humanity. But what will it have to do with us when once heart and brain are stilled!

These thoughts did not shape themselves into words, but they flashed like fire on poor Adrienne's consciousness, while a deadly chill of fear at facing that terrible Unknown took hold upon her like an icy hand.

Innocent as she was, and stainless as was her conscience, she experienced that purely human terror of Death which assails us all—the darkness and silence and chill touched her, and she shuddered at what must follow.

(To be continued.)

LORD NORMAN'S WARD.

(Continued from page 345.)

"Miss Rose Dudley!" cried the valet, excitedly; "I am not talking about Miss Rose Dudley!" Then, "I am speaking of Miss Day! It was she who, when we heard nothing of you after you had been released by the brigands, went in search of you, hunted for you from town to town where the cholera was raging, and people were dying like rotten sheep! It was she who found you at last, and nearly at death's door, and nursed you back to life! I never saw such devotion in my life, my lord; and I think it is right that you should know all about it!"

"You are right," said Lord Norman, after quite a minute, for what he had been just told took him quite by surprise.

He felt now that he hated Rose. Her manners were simply despicable, and her audacity more than surprising. She had been so ready to take credit for an act she had not done, while Iola had concealed the service she had rendered. The two women were as different to each other as light and darkness!

"I am glad you think so, my lord!" said the valet. "I was afraid you would think I was taking a liberty; but I could not bear that Miss Iola should get no credit for what she had done!"

Lord Norman had become very excited—more excited than the valet had ever seen him before. He could hardly wait to allow the valet to complete his story.

The first thing he did on being released from the hands of his valet was to go in search of Iola.

He met Rose on the stairs, but hurried by, scarcely stopping to say a word. If he had remained a moment longer in her presence he knew he would give vent to his anger at her death.

"How very energetic Lord Norman looks this morning!" said Rose to Lady Norman. "He has not been so active since his illness!" Then Rose thought to herself, "his wedding will take place shortly, and I shall enjoy his great wealth."

Lord Norman found Iola in the library poring over an Italian grammar. Since she had been to Italy she had taken a fancy to learn that language, and was getting on very well. She found study the best thing to make her forget her love for Lord Norman.

"Iola!" he cried, as she looked up, "I have come to thank you!"

"For what?" asked Iola.

"For your kindness and your devotion to me!" said Lord Norman. "I have heard all about your brave, good deeds in Italy, and I should be less than a man if I did not come to tell you how grateful I am. I am afraid, Iola, that you have been really misjudged, for you are the best hearted girl in the great, wide world. You dear, good girl—you angel upon earth."

He took her little hands in his, and gazed into her beautiful soft eyes as he spoke. There was an expression on his face that startled Iola. No woman could fail to understand that glance. It meant plainly "I love you."

"It was my duty to look after you!" said Iola, using his favourite word.

"But it is not every one who do their duty in this wicked world!" said Lord Norman. Then, before she could make any resistance, he took her into his arms, and kissed her again and again, until Iola suddenly remembered his engagement to Rose.

It was at this moment that Rose entered the room, and gazed at Lord Norman and Iola with surprise and rage. She saw clearly that she was found out, that Lord Norman had discovered her deceit, and despised her for it.

"I am sorry to have disturbed you, my lord!" said Rose Dudley, and then gently shut the door, leaving Lord Norman and Iola together.

Lord Norman was glad that Rose had found him kissing Iola, since it had saved him the trouble of breaking off their engagement.

"Oh, Lord Norman! what will Lady Norman say when she hears that I have consented to be your wife!" cried Iola.

"Let's go and see!" said Lord Norman, with a bright, happy laugh; and there was a brighter look on his face than Iola had ever seen there before.

Seeing how frightened Iola looked, he added, encouragingly, "I am sure my mother will be glad to hear that we are to marry."

They came into the drawing-room hand-in-hand, and she saw Lord Norman's happy face, and heard his explanation. She took Iola in her arms and kissed her, saying—

"You will make Norman a better wife than anyone else. Since you have saved his life he must devote it to you."

[THE END]

PARTORIA is in many respects the most agreeable of all South African towns for permanent residence. It is on the high plateau where the air is dry and bracing—a climate suggestive of Colorado in its virtues for those whose lungs are weak. Geographically it is admirably situated as the prospective centre of a railway net destined to bind Delagoa Bay with the African west coast and Calro with the Cape. The streets of Pretoria are broad avenues, laid out originally rather with reference to the great ex-trains than to the probability of a normal traffic likely to prove crowding. At present the streets are much too wide for the population, and the expense of maintaining them and laying the dust is, of course, heavy. But when this shall have become the centre of the prospective Dominion of South Africa, we shall feel for the original Boers something of the same gratitude as is cherished in America for those who planned the National capital on the banks of the Potomac, with a view to posterity.

SWEETHEART AND TRUE.

—10—

CHAPTER XXIII.—(continued.)

"We have none of us any doubts of that, Sir Hubert," remarks Mr. Draycot, heartily.

"When Mr. Chester Bruce confided his secret to you he knew he had placed it in safe hands."

"It is good of you to say so," returns the other.

"Poor Chester, he told me everything unreservedly, but of course, it was not in my power to do much to help him. He came to me again after that interview with his father, in which Sir Gordon had made it a command, a *sine qua non* of future indulgence, that his son should marry where he pleased, and desired him to marry. The lady had been chosen for him, it was his part of the contract to obey. Chester was very dejected about the affair."

"I have done a foolish thing, Hubert, old fellow," he said to me. "It would have been much better to have told my father at once point-blank that I was married. Of course, I know he would have been infuriated; still, I wish I had; instead of which, like a fool and an idiot, I stammered out that I did not want to marry at all. Could anything have been more stupid policy on my part! But I was so taken back for the moment at my father saying he had found a suitable wife for me, and I had better begin my wooing at once—I, who had the sweetest, dearest, and best of little wives already. The instant my stupid excuse was out of my mouth I was heartily sorry to have said it; but it was done. I could not retract my words then, and I had lost a splendid opportunity of letting my father know the whole truth. I must have been a perfect fool. But you know my father's strong will. I literally dared not reveal my secret after that. What am I to do! Advise me, like the best of friends that you are."

"I thought myself it would have been wiser to have faced the worst at once rather than shield himself in the way he had; but, then, poor fellow, he never was so strong-minded about those kind of things as I was. He was of a more yielding and placid disposition. I strongly advised him to wait a little, and see how things went; to try and conciliate his father into a less tyrannical frame of mind about the destined marriage. As for your secret, Chester, that, of course, must be revealed sooner or later, I remember saying. I think myself it should be sooner. It must come out, you know; and if your father found you had been deceiving him it would probably make him very, very angry indeed, and not unjustly so in that case."

"And Olive, poor little darling, what am I to do about her! I shall have to leave her very soon, and go back to India. I had hoped my father would have been amenable, and that she would have gone to live at Marleswoods while I was away; but, I suppose, now I must find some other home for her."

"Then after some further discussion, I promised him that I would see after her welfare in his absence if he eventually returned to India without having acknowledged his marriage, which I strenuously urged and begged him not to do, showing him in what an anomalous position he would leave his poor young wife if he did so, to which he heartily agreed."

"Oh, Chester, my dear son! why did you not confide in me!" breaks in the voice of the old Baronet, sadly. "I don't think I would have been so hard upon you as you seem to have imagined. But perhaps you were right in your estimate, after all, for in those days I was a tyrant, though I always meant to be a kind one, and my domineering spirit lost me my own son's confidence, for which I cannot now forgive myself."

"Chester always spoke most dutifully about you, believe me, Sir Gordon," rejoins the younger Baronet once more.

"More fear than love, I am afraid," asserts Sir Gordon, sadly. "Well, continue your story. Regret will not make things different to what they have turned out."

"About ten days after he had returned to Marleswoods, Chester came to me one night in

the greatest trouble. He had been imperatively recalled from leave, and was obliged to join his regiment at once, without a day's delay. Poor fellow! he was in a dreadful state of mind about his young wife, and I again promised to look after her welfare. He left her to my care and protection. With regard to his father, he said,—

"I can't tell him now, Hubert; I must wait until I can get back, which will be as soon as I possibly can."

"Almost his last words to me were,—

"Good-bye, dear old friend! Take care of Olive for me until I come back. I leave her to you."

"I felt it a sacred trust!" with lowered voice.

"It was my poor son's last legacy," murmurs old Sir Gordon, sorrowfully.

"Yes, unhappily so. Well, the first part of my duty was to find Chester's wife a home. I could not leave her at Seize Court. My wife would have been curious about her, naturally; besides, it was too close to Marlewoode, and in every way impossible. I advertised, but the answers somehow did not please me. Then one afternoon, when Mr. Daunt happened to be over at Seize Court about some land drainage system, in the course of the conversation I asked him casually if he knew of a nice quiet home where a young lady would be well taken care of and pleasantly placed, intimating that such accommodation would be very liberally paid for."

"I remember him saying no, he thought not; then later on, before he left, having evidently turned the matter over in his mind, he said that he thought he did. I asked him to come and talk it over the same evening, and he did so, the result being that Chester's wife went to live with his sister; keeping her maiden name of Lytster for the time being."

"Yes. She came to live with us in our quiet country house by the sea," puts in Stephen's wife, as if in corroboration of all Sir Hubert had just said. "To me she seemed the sweetest young thing I had ever met with—so pretty, so delicate, so fragile, just like a flower."

"And as short-lived!" adds Mr. Draycot, with some feeling.

"Just a noisome bloom that faded away. I soon grew to love her dearly. My sister-in-law was always 'Miss Daunt,' but to her I was 'Janet,' and sometimes 'dear Janet.' Oh! I have never forgotten it," says the woman again, a faint flush of pleasure at the recollection illumining her cheek.

"I feared she was not long for this world when I used to go and see her at intervals, which Mr. Daunt often knew of, and which gave him, no doubt, a handle of vile and monstrous insinuation, which he has made use of in dishonouring the memory of that most true and virtuous lady," says Sir Hubert, with a glance of disgust at the man who had uttered it.

Stephen shrugs his shoulders, and tries to return a sardonic smile, but he does not speak. He is waiting to hear what further evidence can be offered against him, and until they have quite finished their accusations he will not utter a word which might by some hazard incriminate himself.

It all depends upon the memory of his poor ill-used wife, who in this case seems most indubitably an avenging spirit in the cause of justice.

"Subsequent events proved that Mr. Daunt, though he is base enough to traduce the memory of Sir Gordon's son's wife, in connection with Sir Hubert Chichester, knew differently before the young wife had been long under his sister's roof," pursued Mr. Draycot, filling in the pauses. "With Miss Daunt's aid, and by tampering with some letters which arrived through Sir Hubert to young Mrs. Bruce from her husband, he possessed himself of the secret, of which, however, strange to say, he made no use. Why he kept silent at that time, and feigned belief in things as they appeared to be on the surface, is known only to himself. Conjecture, however, points to the conclusion that he wanted to wait and see how he could use and turn the knowledge of this secret to the best advantage. You say you firmly

believe this to have been the case from what happened after, do you not, Mrs. Daunt?"

"I do, Mr. Draycot," answers the woman addressed. "I had no hand in tampering with the letters. They did not trust me to help them, and they were right, for I would have scorned to plot against the sweet young lady; and she, too, had no idea of it. I only found it out later on."

"At any rate, Mr. Daunt kept the knowledge to himself, presumably waiting to use it on occasion. He may have had some idea of supplanting Sir Gordon's son in the first instance; it is very probable that what was in his mind then, but circumstances soon happened which placed the matter in a totally different light to him, and he availed himself of them in a vile and felonious way," the lawyer proceeds, always in the same clear, distinct, and impressive way.

Stephen is still silent. He never moves from his old position, or unfolds his arms, and the sneering smile lingers on his lips; but he neither contradicts nor affirms, and he might be the statue of a malicious devil enjoying his evil work.

"About this time," Mr. Draycot goes on the next moment, "certain members of the Bruce family died. They were the two who would have come in turn into the Marlewoode property, falling the succession of Sir Gordon's son. Thus no one stood between the estate and Mr. Stephen Daunt but Sir Gordon's son Chester, and any children he might have in the future! You can all understand the position. On this pivot of succession turns the whole history of past and present!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

"Oh, villain, villain! His very opinion in the letter! Abhorred villain! unnatural, detested, and brutish villain!"

MR. DRAYCOT pauses once more to allow his foregone speech to take due effect.

No one attempts to speak or interrupt him, for each one with different feelings knows that the crisis of discovery is slowly and surely approaching.

At last the lawyer looks straight across the writing-table to where Miss Rebecca Daunt sits rigid, erect, with compressed mouth and hard expression.

She has hitherto been, as it were, disregarded in the discussion. No one has appealed to her, or has she as yet been in any way called upon to break that hard, uncompromising silence which she has steadfastly maintained since her brother entered the library. But her turn has come.

"I believe, Miss Daunt, that you wrote to your brother a private letter unknown to your sister-in-law living with you, about the young lady under your care, to the effect that she being about to become a mother, what provision should be made for the birth of a child, did you not?" Mr. Draycot inquires of the gaunt figure in the high-backed oak seat opposite him.

Then the grim lips unclose for the first time.

"Yes," she answers, coldly. "I did write such a letter as you describe."

Stephen shoots a swift glance at his sister as she speaks—a glance of surprise and displeasure. He cannot understand her set affirmation to the lawyer's query at all, and quite expected to have heard her deny any such proceeding on her part at once without delay or hesitation.

"What can she mean by it!" he wonders, angrily.

"Thank you, Miss Daunt," says the lawyer with emphasis, as if until this moment he had not been sure of her position, and was now glad to find she intended to abide by the bargain made between them, and thus obviate any unnecessary dragging out of an interview painful to all concerned. "Wonderfully do things happen sometimes in the cause of evil; but, strangely enough, on the very morning that this letter reached your brother at Marlewoode, terrible tidings reached Sir Gordon. A telegram arrived, announcing the death of his son Chester

out in India. There had been a raid on some insurgents from Candahar, and he had been assassinated by an ambush with others of his troop. I need not say that the news was a most terrible shock to Sir Gordon. He seemed utterly heart-broken, for he really loved his only son, and they had not parted upon the usual affectionate terms. At that time Sir Gordon would have pardoned anything and everything to that dead son, and would have taken the poor bereaved young wife to his heart and home with affection and welcome."

"Yes, I would have freely forgiven Chester everything had I known, but I did not," murmurs the old Baronet, regretfully.

"No; Sir Gordon never knew of that young wife's existence," pursues Mr. Draycot, "or there would be a baby heir to Marlewoode if it lived, in place of the man who now stepped in to enjoy a position, as yet not rightfully his own, and whom he naturally believed to be the legal heir to the estate. According to your account, Miss Daunt, your brother appeared at your small seaside home on receipt of your letter, did he not?"

"Yes; he came at my request," again comes briefly from the compressed lips.

Stephen looks at his sister incomprehensibly; but she stares straight before her into space and does not return his angry gaze.

"And the result of his coming was that you, your sister-in-law, Mrs. Stephen Daunt, and the delicate young wife moved from your home to a tiny cottage far away on the Cornish moors—such move being undertaken to prevent a knowledge of your whereabouts, and ensure a secrecy and concealment of events. Am I right in saying this?"

Miss Daunt nods in a jerky kind of way.

"Perfectly!" she responds, shortly.

This time Stephen unmistakably glares at her, but remains silent, thinking it more politic, for the present, at any rate, to say nothing than inveigh against his sister's unwelcome candour, where duplicity was necessary.

He cannot make signs to her, for the simple reason that she never once looks at him, or even in his direction; therefore it is hopeless to try and catch her eye.

It slowly dawns upon his understanding that his amiable sister does not stand in need of his guidance, or is desirous of courting it in any way.

"Unfortunately at this period of the history," says Mr. Draycot, with emphasis—"I may say, most unfortunately—Sir Hubert Chichester was away from Seize Court. He, with his wife and little son, had gone on a yachting tour, and because no one precisely knew his whereabouts, it became an impossibility to communicate to him the sudden news of his best friend's death. Sir Gordon himself told Sir Hubert on his return to Seize Court, mourning the terrible loss of his dear son with great grief and sorrow. There was another event which had happened during that absence," adds the lawyer, more slowly, "and which Sir Hubert had to be informed of on his return home. It came to him through Mr. Stephen Daunt. Sir Hubert, may I call upon you to state the substance of that other information as nearly as possible in the same words as it was given to you?"

The younger Baronet advances a pace or two from the massive fireplace, and nearer to the lawyer.

"I was told by Mr. Daunt," he began, with forcible diction, "that while on a little quiet rambling in Cornwall with his sister, who always took some small holiday away from her home every year, the young lady, Miss Olive Lytster, whom I had placed under that sister's care, had been prematurely delivered of a little girl, and that both mother and child had died as the birth; adding that his sister had done everything in her power to save the mother's life but in vain; and that under the circumstances he thought the child's death a most happy termination, which must be eminently satisfactory to myself. I knew what he meant to infer, the second! but I took no notice of his innuendo," with disgusted expression. "Mr. Daunt told me what I have just said, and he showed me

the certificate of the death of both mother and babe!"

There is a distinct and level pause, then Mr. Draycot says,—

"And of course you believed this information to be all correct, Sir Hubert?"

"Naturally I did. Who would not have done so in my place! And then the certificate, properly signed and all in due form, was, to my mind, proof positive, not to be doubted for a moment. It seemed a very sad affair, this death of both husband and wife within such a short space of one another, and I must honestly confess that the knowledge of the child's demise at its birth was a great relief to me in one sense; for had it lived I should have been obliged to inform Sir Gordon of his son's marriage, and proved the child's legality and kinship—a proceeding which would have been infinitely painful to me, to have to notify a son's death to a grieving father, who was thinking of that dead son with only loving feelings and regret. As things stood it seemed to me to be far better to let the matter rest in peaceful oblivion, buried with the two poor things who, in death, had been once again united. If opening a wound in his heart, by telling Sir Gordon would have benefited anybody, my duty would have impelled me to do so without any further thought, but it would not. I did not even consider it necessary to undeceive, as I thought, Mr. Daunt, as to who Miss Olive Lyster really was, lest he should try and make capital out of his knowledge, and cast a stain on my dead friend's memory to the father. Little did I dream that he already knew what I kept from him, and had used it to his own vile ends," Sir Hubert finishes, with keenest scorn.

"No blame can attach to you in any way," answers Mr. Draycot; "you only acted as any man of honour would act by a dead friend. I am sure Sir Gordon acknowledges it."

"Yes! I do, indeed," says the old Baronet, earnestly, "for what he did to help my son, and protect my granddaughter's mother"—laying one hand on Olive's—"I now thank him with all my heart."

"I think, Sir Hubert, that your share in this history goes no farther. From the time you speak of until a few days back, I believe, as far as you were concerned, nothing disturbed that buried past, or caused you to see in Mr. Stephen Daunt a usurper and a miserable schemer!" goes on the lawyer once more.

"Nothing, Mr. Draycot. I have remained absolutely undisturbed in mind until these few days back," is the answer.

"And then we hear a strange thing," asserts Mr. Draycot, slowly, looking round him, "something that startles our quiet, and rakes up the buried past. We hear that though the young wife of Chester Bruce did, indeed, die at the birth of her child, the babe lived!—lived and thrived! Therefore the certificate of its birth was a forgery!"

A leaden pallor slowly creeps over the swart face of the figure standing with folded arms and defiant attitude.

The chain is nearly round and about him now. The cursed memory of that poor creature, his wife, has not played her false as he had hoped it might do even at the last, and which caused him to keep silence, lest he should criminate himself unaware. He feels he could strike her down where she stands, near the window, if he only dared. After twenty years of expectancy, to lose what he aimed to gain, was maddening, and she writhed in impotent fury.

All his evil-doing was being brought home to him; each link of the chain he imagined he had severed so cleverly in that past was being joined to the rest to form a complete whole, and prove him everything that was bad. He tried to make one final struggle to fight.

"Bah!" he says, with a kind of savage scorn. "Do you think to frighten me—to make me cringe and grovel at your feet? Because you all err if you do. I say that your whole accusation is a concoction among you to wrest the succession of Marleswoods after Sir Gordon's death from me, its legal future owner; and I defy you to prove the certificate was a forgery."

It is mere idle bravado that he speaks, and he himself knows it. He knows it can be proved by time and search, and with such remembrance of place and things as can evidently be supplied by his wife. That the child's life from its birth can be traced out year by year if necessary now that the outlines of the plot are laid bare, and thus prove him a villain.

Mr. Draycot takes no immediate notice of the defiance, but says calmly to the woman by the window,—

"Mrs. Daunt, will you tell us what happened in that lonely little cottage whence, by your husband's command, you, your sister-in-law, and young Mrs. Bruce had moved? What excuse was made for that removal?"

"My sister-in-law's health, which needed a warmer air than the east coast; and, of course, our boarder accompanied us. She, poor dear, needed a warmer climate more than my sister-in-law, for as the time went on she seemed to fade and droop more like a flower than ever. Anyway, she went gladly enough. Just before her baby was born she said to me one day when we were sitting together in the garden,—

"Janet, I am going to tell you something which no one knows but Sir Hubert Chichester. You must promise to keep it a secret, unless—unless I should die."

"Dear, do not talk about dying!" I answered her.

"I sometimes think I shall die when my baby is born," she said, again, in a dreamy kind of fashion. "And in case I should die, you must promise to do something for me. I know I can trust you, dear Janet, though they do say unkind things about you, and that you are only a poor lunatic; but you are always good and kind to me. I do not believe it is true. You know I think I am a little afraid of Miss Daunt and her brother. They are so stern and cold-mannered, and when they look at one with their black eyes, I feel a sort of shudder as I used to feel when I saw a snake. Sir Hubert wished me to come to Miss Daunt, and that I should be better with them than anyone else; but all the same, I am a tiny bit afraid of them I believe. I know that it must seem odd my being here as I am, but—but I am not what you all think me, Janet, I am not indeed."

"I answered her that I was glad with all my heart that she had come to us. To me she had been like a sunbeam, and I did not care what she was—I loved her. They might call me mad if they chose, but she might trust me never to betray anything she wished me to keep secret, or divulge any confidence. They might tear me limb from limb, but they should never get it from me, unless she wished."

"It is not always going to be a secret from everyone, dear Janet. Only for a little time—a few more months. I must bear everything until then, until my—my beloved husband returns to me."

"Then she told me all the story of her marriage, and how her husband had been everything in the world to her, she having no one but him."

"But, you see, I cannot be certain when he will come; if he should be kept in India, and my baby will soon be born! If it is a girl it is to be named after me—Olive Lyster; if a boy after my darling husband; remember that, Janet. I tell you because I must tell someone before I am taken ill. And if I die I want you to take this little iron box to Sir Hubert Chichester. It holds the certificate of my marriage out in India, and my wedding-ring. Hide the box, so that Miss Daunt does not find it; I do not wish them to know yet. Of course when my husband returns, and I live, it will not matter. Nothing will matter to me when I have him. He would not let me go back to India with him, for the doctors told him I should die out there; perhaps it will be all the same here. If I get well I shall ask you for the box again. It is only to prevent Miss Daunt seeing it. I think she has tried to pry into my things, only I have nothing but this little box that could tell her anything. Will you do what I ask, dear Janet?" she smiled, coaxingly.

"I told her that I would do anything in the

world for her, gladly and thankfully, that she had thought me worthy enough to be made her confidante. Also that she must not think she was going to die. It could do her no good to have thoughts like that—that I felt sure she was going to live for very great happiness in the future. 'Pray Heaven I may!' I remember her saying, thoughtfully, as I took the little iron box, only about four inches square, from her hand."

"I believe you hid that box as soon as you possibly could, did you not, Mrs. Daunt?" says Mr. Draycot, questioningly.

"Yes, I hid it securely and safely from all prying eyes. I had no great faith in my sister-in-law's sense of honour, for I knew she had tried to discover all about our pretty young boarder as far as she was able from the first. She was well paid, otherwise I do not think she would have been as agreeable to her as she was—in a grim fashion. I had no safe hiding-place from her myself, none I could trust, so I buried it one night at the foot of a Cornish oak, a stunted, low-growing tree, at the bottom of the garden."

"It had an old knotted trunk and great moss-covered roots. I dug down by these roots under the moss and lichen, and laid the box there, carefully covering it over again. I knew no one would dream of looking for it in such a spot. Well, very soon after this the baby was born, and the dear young mother's words came true, for she died," ends Janet Daunt, with lowered voice.

"You communicated that death immediately on its taking place to your brother, Miss Daunt, from what I gather!" asks the lawyer of the rigid figure opposite him.

"Yes, I did," with brevity.

"With the result that he came at once to arrange about a burial, &c.?"

Miss Rebecca nodded a "yes" once more.

"Tell us, if you please, Mrs. Daunt, what took place after your husband's arrival."

"You must know that a woman from a village had come in to see after the baby, for my sister-in-law knew little of a baby's ways, and she would not let me care for it by myself."

"Well, when my husband came into the room one morning after the pretty young mother had been laid away in her grave, he took the baby from its cradle—we were alone in the room, and—and laid it in my arms, saying scoffingly at the same time, 'There is a baby for you Janet; you have often wanted one, there it is. You can call it your own if you like to do so! I shall not say you nay; in fact, I give it you as a present.'

"It was a heartless kind of thing to say, but then I knew my husband had no heart; I found that out very soon after my marriage. No, Stephen, I answered, holding the tiny thing close to me, this baby can never belong to me, and it is not yours to give. Its place is not with us in the future, but with its own kith and kin."

"What do you mean, you mad thing!" he said, again. He sometimes called me that when I displeased him, for he knew it aggravated me and raised bad blood in my heart, 'what do you mean by kith and kin? This little base-born brat is a nonentity in the world, I assure you. You can keep it with safety; there is none to hinder you. Such things as this have no kith and kin, you poor fool!' It is not base-born, I answered, as quick as thought. 'How do you know it is not base-born? What could you know about it, a mad thing like you?' he asked me, mockingly. 'I know more than you, at any rate, you and Rebecca both. I know that it has a father out in India, Mr. Chester Bruce, and a grandfather at Marleswoods, Sir Gordon Bruce. I possess the certificate of the mother's marriage which she gave me to give to Sir Hubert Chichester in case she died. I promised her I would, and I mean to do it.'

"He stared at me with the most extraordinary expression on his face for a minute, then he said, 'What curious tale have you got hold of now, Janet? Is it a new collage of your extremely fertile brain? It sounds like it, I must confess, and I for one don't believe a single syllable of it. A certificate of marriage! Bah! you dream it,

my good woman, you dreamt it!" "Sir Hubert will not call it a dream when he sees it," I returned, more calmly.

"He looked at me again, with the same expression, then he said, 'To prove your own story, where is this same certificate of marriage?' 'That is my business,' was my cautious answer. 'I do not intend to tell you; it goes into no hands from mine but Sir Hubert's. It is a sacred promise, which I mean to perform when he comes back.'"

"He waited a little after I had spoken, then he says, carefully, as if the matter was of no real importance, 'Very well, since you are so determined about this affair so be it. Sir Hubert is away, will be away, I think, some time. Of course, if you really have this paper and made a promise about it, perform it by all means. I certainly cannot understand such a thing being possible myself. Miss Olive Lyster was placed with Rebecca as Miss Lyster, and I conclude it to be a fact, until I see very strong and conclusive evidence to the contrary. I fear your certificate is a myth, Janet, a veritable nightmare.'"

"He said no more, but for all his pretended unbelief I know those two watched me like a cat does a mouse to find out where I had hidden what I had told Stephen I possessed; and they searched every nook and corner of that little cottage unavailingly.

"At the end of a week my husband began one evening in a smooth voice and fairly amiable manner. 'Listen, Janet, if you really possess a certificate as you say, you had better entrust it to me to deliver to Sir Hubert Oldchester on his return. I am the proper person to do it, and not you.' 'No,' I returned, doggedly; 'none gives it to Sir Hubert but myself. I mean to fulfil my promise to the dead.' 'You fool! you idiot! you have not got it,' he broke out, angrily. 'If you are so sure of that, why did you and Rebecca take all the trouble to look for it then?' I asked him, ironically. 'You shall tell me,' he went on, seizing my arm and holding it in an iron grip. 'Tell me at once, this instant, where you have hidden it, you devil!' violently shaking me, till I felt my head whirl and throb again. 'I will not,' I gasped out, 'I will never tell you.' Then in a perfect tempest and frenzy of passion he struck me a heavy blow. I remember feeling crushed, staggering and falling against the granite mantelpiece, while something seemed to crack suddenly in my brain. I believe I had a fit.

"How long it lasted, or what time elapsed between that and a return to consciousness of surrounding objects, I cannot tell. One thing I know now, that when I did so return memory had gone. To me the past was a blank, and I lived only in a dazed, dreamy present, which told me no tales of what had gone before. I remembered nothing; memory was dead."

"The shock and excitement had been too much for you, Mrs. Daunt," puts in Mr. Draycot, as the woman ceases to speak.

"Yes. I lived on harmless enough, my sole pleasure the baby, which grew and thrived. We two were inseparable, and they let me be with the child. I think their idea was it kept me quiet, but all the time the sight of it brought me back no recollection. Sometimes I experienced a dim sense of wanting to remember something that I could not, but it soon faded again from my mind. I believe they consulted some doctor about me, and whatever he said made them decide upon shutting me up. Perhaps he had told them I was not a hopeless case, and they were afraid my memory might come back and spoil their evil plans. Anyway, I was easily disposed of, and shut up in a private madhouse abroad, in a lonely place near Havre. I knew where I was going. They told me mockingly how mad I was, and how I was going to live with others of my kind. Then I strove to think about things, to remember the balance of my mind. Alas! all in vain, and the madhouse became my home. But after many years thoughts began to trouble me. My brain seemed to get clearer, gradually and surely, and I began to remember. Slowly sanity came back to me. Then I planned my escape, got over to England—to Cornwall. I

went to that little cottage on the moor, after finding the woman who had nursed the tiny babe. It stood untouched by time. There, too, was the Cornish oak, with its lichen-covered roots. I dug down and unburied my treasure; it had lain safe and unharmed for twenty years almost, and I carried it straight to Sir Hubert Oldchester, to whom I related all the past. Thus I kept my promise to the dead!" ended Janet, raising her faded eyes heavenwards, as if she thus sought a smile from above.

There is a silence in the room, deep and profound.

"So finishes the history," says Mr. Draycot, at length, "and you stand there a felon, Mr. Stephen Daunt. What have you to say for yourself?"

"That you have no witnesses," comes hoarsely from his pallid lips.

"Pardon me, but on the contrary we have a very excellent witness in the person of Miss Rebecca Daunt, sitting opposite me," says Mr. Draycot, indicating the lady in question with a motion of his hand towards her.

"My sister!" Stephen snarls, looking at her as if he could murder her where she sits. "Yes, your sister!" puts in Miss Daunt, with precision turning her head and returning her brother's gaze for the first time. "I decline being your tool any longer. My future has been guaranteed to me, therefore your promised reward goes for nothing, which in any case would be nil now. And I am prepared to swear that everything which has been said here this morning is perfectly true, on my solemn oath. I always thought it might and like this. If my time were to come over again I should refuse to share such a secret. You must own that when you broached the idea of marrying the girl, so that, should anything ever come to light you would have a hold on Marleswoode, I tried to dissuade you, though I eventually helped you to it, as I have helped you all through. But that is over, and I distinctly decline to be your tool any more."

"Which means that you are a traitor, that you have sold me for some money advantage, of course!" roars Stephen, furiously.

"Allow me to place the matter in its true light. Miss Rebecca Daunt has been pleased to accept an annuity for the term of her natural life from Sir Gordon Bruce," puts in Mr. Draycot, at this juncture. "She is so far not traitor to you, as that it was only after a great deal of persuasion and promise of such annuity that she was induced to allow herself to be called upon as a witness—I own a valuable one—still we could have done without her had we been pushed to such a course. In her decision she has acted wisely, and shown extreme sound sense. I beg to congratulate her."

"And that other thing!" Stephen goes on, with contemptuous malice, pointing a finger at Janet, while his eyes seem to burn with vicious rage; "that wretched creature, my wife. What of her? Where does she go—what is to be done for her reward? But stay, I forget I need not ask that question. Since she acknowledges herself my wife she must be subservient to my will. Where I go she must go if I choose. Oh! sweet, angelic wife of mine, what a paradise on earth your future life shall be with your fond and adoring husband! Come, we will go together, my beloved," and he advances a step or two nearer towards her with the intention of seizing her arm.

"Your wife is not going with you," interposes Mr. Draycot; "she will remain here at Marleswoode under Sir Gordon's protection, who charges himself with her guardianship henceforth. You will not be allowed to make a paradise of her future life. She has suffered enough from you already."

"She shall go!" is the furious answer. "My wife must come! I insist upon her coming." "To prison with you!" remarks Mr. Draycot, significantly. "No, I think not. You have rendered yourself liable to a criminal prosecution for forgery. You cannot take your wife to prison with you, and if you do not accept such terms as are offered you, most certainly you will find yourself there, and very soon too! But Sir Gordon will generously forego prosecution on the

sole condition that you leave England immediately and remain abroad. He is prepared to give you a cheque for one hundred pounds for your passage and other expenses. Not that he thinks you need money, for you have probably taken good care to feather your own nest considerably during your sojourn at Marleswoode. Still, there it is. Do you accept?" and Mr. Draycot lays a slip of paper on the table; it is a cheque for one hundred pounds.

Stephen Daunt unfolds his arms, advances to the table, takes up the cheque, folds it in two and places it in his breast-pocket, buttoning his coat over it. Then he gazes darkly round the room.

"Yes," he says, slowly, with sneering lips; "I have played a losing game, and I accept. Oh! charming group, good-bye, all of you! I hope I may never see any of your cursed faces again."

"We all heartily reciprocate your amiable wish, Mr. Daunt," returns Mr. Draycot, quietly. "Your hat is in the hall, I think. Allow me the pleasure of opening the door for you!" and walking towards it as he speaks, setting it wide open.

Stephen takes a few steps towards it, and then stops short.

"Farewell, Sir Gordon Bruce," he begins with an elaboration of sarcastic politeness in his voice, and a world of malice in his black eyes. "May you find your charming, grand-daughter all you could wish. Farewell, Miss Olive Lyster Bruce. You can now marry your discarded lover, if he will, have you. Perhaps he will not after being so unceremoniously thrown over. Anyhow, you have my best wishes on the subject. Dear, worthy, staunch sister Rebecca, farewell. I forgive you, and wish you no worse than that you may live long to enjoy the annuity you have so discreetly earned in such a thoroughly praiseworthy and sisterly manner. And, oh! sweet, sweet wife of mine, whom it is an agony to part from, an eternal farewell; and may you burn—in hell."

Then he turns again to the wide-open door, by which stands Mr. Draycot; goes through defiantly, like the cur he is, into the big hall, and the library door is firmly closed after him.

In another moment those silent listeners in that room hear the front portal clang to with a force and reverberation that resounds through the whole of Marleswoode.

It tells them he is gone, and they have seen the very last of Stephen Daunt.

So ends the history of a sin. "When night is darkest dawn is nearest," is oftentimes a great truth. Olive's night of sorrow is over, a new dawn of peace and happiness is already on its way—an Indian summer!

CHAPTER XXV.

"Learn several great truths, as that it is impossible to see into the ways of Futurity, that Punishment always attends the villain, and that Love is the fond soothe of the human breast!"

So the "sweet bells" ceased their jangling, to ring in, softly and gently, joy, peace and happiness!

What more could human heart desire? And yet there was still left in Olive's soul the sound of one tiny discordant bell in that sweet chime. No one heard the little jangle but herself, for it touched the love-chord.

That parting by the river, which seemed so far back in the past to her now, when she had bid her love such a sorrowful good-bye—nay, was forced to do so by no will of her own—still remained a lingering regret, full of mournful sadness, which she could not banish from her mind, try as she might to do so.

For the rest she was supremely happy. To her this glorious old English mansion with its verdant park and exquisite gardens round about it, seemed the most beautiful home anyone could desire or dream of possessing. Sir Gordon, too, was a tender and loving grandfather, who could not have too much done for the daughter of his dead son.

There was nothing to jar upon her in any way now. Her life was full of quiet peace. Miss Daunt had retired again to Pont l'Abbaye, though not to the water-mill, Moulino. She had bestowed herself and her annuity upon the convent of Saint Ursula for good, and no doubt the nuns were very charmed to receive her into their haven of rest.

Janet Daunt remained at Marleswoode, where Sir Gordon intended to keep her. She was perfectly happy to be always at Olive's beck and call. In fact, nothing pleased her better than to wait upon the girl in any way whatever. It was her delight. Poor thing, her life had not been a bed of roses, but the rest of it should be undisturbed and unmolested, Sir Gordon determined.

There were carriages, horses, all the luxury of nobility and riches about the girl, everything which contributes to make life happy and full of comfort. She had nothing to wish for, as it appeared. But sometimes she would clasp her pretty brown palms together and cry to herself—

"I have everything in the world I could wish. Everything but—Alan!"

I fear few mortals are never satisfied; but, indeed, the girl's heart was still mourning for her lover whom she had herself sent away.

She had not yet seen him, for he was still away from Selva Court; though she heard Sir Hubert telling her grandfather of his son's expected return home at an early date.

It made her heart thrill and leap to hear of his coming. She wondered how they two would meet—how, when, and where! What they would say to each other if they would meet as strangers or friends!

Of course now they never could be anything but friends. Alan could not be her lover again after she had treated him so badly, so miserably.

There was only one thing she desired him to know, and that was the fact of its not being her fault all through—not her fault they bid each other good-bye—that a shameful lie which she had been bidden to believe in as a truth was the sole and only cause of that parting.

Perhaps his father would tell Alan all the whole story when he returned to Selva Court, and then he might understand her better, and blame her no more.

So the days took unto themselves wings and brought a bright, crisp, glorious October noon.

The hedges were all russet-hued, and some of the first leaves were beginning to fall, but the country looked grandly autumnal and full of charm still, as Olive walked across the meadow by a little trodden-out path in the grass.

When she came to the kissing-gate at the end of this pasture land, belonging to Marleswoode, she stayed her steps a little, and, leading her arms on the rail, looked round on the autumnal beauty, thinking what a glorious place her home was, whilst overhead in an ash tree, hanging its branches thickly down, a thrush was trilling his roundelay.

There was a restful calm, a lulling sense of peace in Nature that day, that made the girl stand dreamingly still and quiet by that old kissing-gate under the shady ash.

She thought over all that had gone before; of the fire of pain through which she had but so lately passed; the immeasurable distance between then and now; of her love and Alan Chichester; then, lifting her head, thought became reality, for lo! he himself was coming over the meadow where she had also come.

He was here, nearing her, to be soon by her side, as friend or enemy, she knew not which yet.

The sight of him made her heart stand still, in a mingling of fear and rapture; fear lest he should pass her by as some utter stranger, because of his treatment at her hands, though she knew him of a forgiving and generous nature; and rapture at the thought of their once more being friends.

Olive waited in dumb anticipation of how it would be with them both henceforth.

As Alan reached her a sudden small courage filled her little throbbing heart, a courage which made her lift her head to meet his look, and hold out one hand towards him in a kind of greeting.

"We are neighbours!" she began, in a soft, tremulous murmur, full of wistful entreaty for him to be kind and generous and forgiving, "near neighbours, and—and friends, are we not?"

Then she waited in an agony of dread, lest he should refuse to take that proffered palm in a new-born amity and goodwill.

In another moment doubt and dread vanished, for without a single dissentient gesture or look he takes her hand in his.

"With all my heart," he says, with a sort of earnest gladness, as if his breast was also lightened in some way or other by this meeting at the kissing-gate, and that until now he, too, had wondered what the future was going to be to them both.

"Olive!" he goes on the next moment, "I have heard a most wonderful story from my father since my return home yesterday—so marvellous a tale that I can almost feel inclined to discredit its reality, only that I know it is really true, and your presence here confirms it as a fact. It sounds like the veriest romance."

"Yes," she returns, looking up at him, "very wonderful things have happened to me since I saw you last."

"When you bid me go. Ah! you made me very unhappy, Olive—you did, indeed. Tell me," he adds, in a quicker tone, "why you sent me from you that day! Was it because of that most shameful lie they made you believe about my father?"

"Yes," she says, under her breath, with a little sigh, which is not all sorrow now but half gladness.

"You are sure, Olive!" he asks again, with increased earnestness; "perfectly, that it was the sole and only cause?" gazing down into her face, with his grey eyes full of anxious inquiry.

"Yes! What else could I do! I believed what they told me. Oh! I was so miserably unhappy!—such a wretched girl then!" she murmurs sorrowfully in answer, with a world of pathos in her voice.

"You poor little darling!" Alan breaks out suddenly, putting his arm round her without the smallest obstruction on her part, and drawing her near to him. "You poor little sweet thing! I do believe you were fond of me all the time, after all! Were you not?"

She heaves another small sigh to herself, and lays her head against his breast. It is a sigh of bliss only now, for the last tiny, jangling bell in her heart has ceased its jar, and is hushed into sweetness for ever.

"Dear, dearest Alan!" Olive murmurs, in a kind of ecstasy to herself.

There is no need of any other answer, and he asks none of her. They are both quite, quite happy at last.

"For love is the fond soother of the human breast!"

[THE END.]

PRIVATE postal companies, analogous to our express and telegraph corporations, do most of the business in China. They use no stamps, and it is necessary to prepay only about a third of the postage, as the rest is collected from the recipient. Chinese stamps are reckoned in candarins, approximately equivalent to cents, with the Mexican dollar as the base.

ITALY has long boasted that she possesses the highest church in Europe—namely, the Sanctuary of the Madonna on Roccamare. Now she will be able further to boast that she possesses the highest of European hotels, for the Italian Alpine Club has built an inn on the summit of the Colodi Gigante, in the Savoy Alps, upon which the club is said to have spent nearly a million lire. It is no mere club hut of the ordinary type, as it contains three floors. During last summer no fewer than 300 mules were employed in carrying up the necessary materials. The club has a scheme for the erection of a powerful electrical reflector at the hotel whose rays will illuminate the neighbourhood for nearly 100 kilometres.

FACETIE.

THE BLONDE: "I wonder if I shall ever live to be a hundred!" The Brunette: "Not if you remain twenty-two much longer."

"My daughter tells me, sir, that you had the audacity to propose to her! What have you to say to that?" "Nothing, sir, except that your daughter had the audacity to accept me!"

MOTHER (sternly): "He kissed you twice to my knowledge, and I don't know how often after that." Daughter: "Neither do I mamma. I never was much good at mental arithmetic."

FOND PARENT: "I cannot interfere, Bobby; your teacher writes me that she thrashed you on principle." Bobby: "Well, she didn't. Don't you think I know where she licked me!"

THE CHIEF: "I think I'll have to discharge Polk. He's frightfully lazy." Friend: "Slow in everything, eh?" The Chief: "Well—no, not everything. He gets tired quick enough."

VERA: "Mamma, lend me your pin-cushion." Mamma: "What do you want with it, child?" Vera: "I want to take the sawdust out and make a ring for the circus animals you bought me."

TOMMY: "Hallo, Jimmy, what kep' you?" Jimmy: "Me and the old man had an argument. He wanted me to haul some coal into the backyard." Tommy: "How did it end?" Jimmy: "In a draw; I drew it."

"I want to marry your daughter, sir," said Foxey. "Have you spoken to her yet?" asked the father. "No," replied the suitor. "You see, I want to get your refusal first, so that I may have something to work on."

CHOLLY: "Yass; he called me a 'bare-faced hab,' bah Jove!" Gassie: "Weally! And what did you do, deah boy?" Cholly: "I told him if I wanted to I could wait just as big a moustahe as his—so thank!"

"My husband has a great advantage over most men." "Indeed!" "Yes. He walks in his sleep." "I don't see what advantage that can be to a person." "Why, he can carry the baby all night long and still get his natural rest."

"I don't want you to have so much company. You have more callers in a day than I have in a week." Domestic: "Well, mum, perhaps if you'd try to be a little more agreeable you'd have as many friends as I have."

MABEL: "There are now over four thousand avocations open to woman." Clara: "Dear me! What are they?" Mabel: "Let—me—see. One of them is marriage and the other is—is Dear me! I've forgotten the others."

MOTHER: "Who is that young fellow who is calling on you now?" Daughter: "I think he intends to be a minister. He said he wanted to take orders." Mother: "Huh! I guess he's looking for a job as waiter."

MRS. MCINTY: "An' phat did th' doctor say wos th' matter wid y'r eye, Patsy?" Small Son: "He say-ed thur was some foreign substance in it." Mrs. McInty (with an "I told you so" air): "Now, maybe ye'll kape away from thim Eytallans."

"I AM Sherlock Holmes," said the great detective. "I think I can inform—" "Yes, sir," the man interrupted his caller. "If you'll wait until I've put the baby to sleep I'll come down and talk to you." "Ah! Your second," said Holmes, smilingly. "Heavens! how did you guess it?" "Very simple. If it were your first you'd wake it up to show it to me. If you had more than two you'd be at your club about this time."

EDITH: "There is one thing in particular that I like Mr. Tactin for. He is so frank, you know. He always tells me of my faults without the least hesitation. That was the agreement I caused him to make. Bertha: "Do you mean to say that you do not get angry with him?" Edith: "Never." Bertha: "Tell me some of the faults he has found in you." Edith: "Oh, he hasn't found any yet. When I ask him to name them he always says that I am faultless."

SOCIETY.

PRINCESS VICTORIA OF WALES is as devoted to Cromer as ever, and when possible likes to pay her favourite seaside spot a visit. It is thought quite likely that her Royal Highness will consent to open the new pier at Cromer, although Princess Victoria has no liking for big functions.

The German Crown Prince is to pay a visit to the Queen in the course of the summer, either at Osborne about the end of this month, or at Balmoral early in September. The Queen will herself invest her great-grandson with the ribbon and insignia of the Order of the Garter during his stay in England.

PRINCE CHARLES OF DENMARK is at present on duty at the Royal Dockyard in Copenhagen, but in August he will have some cruising, during which, however, he is not likely to leave the Kattegat and the Baltic. Their Royal Highnesses are still staying at their palace in Copenhagen, but later on Princess Charles is expected to take up her residence at Bernstorff.

It is a well-known fact that owing to the German Emperor's left arm having been broken at his birth, it became shrunken and partly useless; yet, so clever is his Majesty in hiding this defect that it is hardly noticeable, and the Emperor rides, fences, and—what is more wonderful—shoots as well and better than most men.

ALTHOUGH a good judge of horseflesh and a capital rider, the Prince of Wales has never excelled as a jehu, and seldom, if ever, has been seen driving in London. Strangely enough, his sons follow in his footsteps; but the young Princesses—his daughters—are smart and safe whips. The Duchess of Eile in particular is a first-rate driver.

The Queen of Holland is very good at drawing and painting. When visiting foreign countries she is always seen with her paint-box, which she carries with her on her morning walks and taken with her in the carriage in the afternoon. Her pictures are often really good. It is a fact that most members of the Orange family have been artistic; some of the late princes used to paint really well. When Queen Wilhelmina was quite young she would often sit at one of the windows in the Palace and sketch the guards.

The Emperor and Empress of Russia have settled at the palace of Peterhof, on the Gulf of Finland, for the summer. It is to be feared that the French will be disappointed in the expectation that the Emperor Nicholas will visit the Paris Exhibition. According to the present arrangements for the Imperial Court, the Emperor and Empress will not leave Russia during this year, but they are to stay at Peterhof until the autumn, and will then go to Livadia, in the Crimea, for two months, accompanied by the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess of Hesse, who are to pay a long visit to their relatives.

The Duchess of Connaught and her daughters will remain at Castle Blaney for three months before going to Scotland, and during most of that time the Duke will be occupied with military duties at the Curragh. Castle Blaney is a charming residence for the Royal visitors, the grounds comprising about a thousand acres, while another thousand are swallowed up in the picturesque Lough Machan, which with its many islands is one of the chief beauties of the place. There is some very fine timber in the demesne, and pretty views of the country round. The Castle, built in the Italian style, dates from the reign of James the First, but it only came into the possession of the Howes in 1874. It is beautifully furnished, and contains, among other treasures, some famous statuary which adorned the Galleries before the fall of the Second Empire.

LORD KENSINGTON, whose death from wounds is announced, was well known in London ball-rooms and also at Ranelagh, for he was a prominent polo player. Lord Kensington spent the early part of last winter in India; and although in the 2nd Life Guards, went out to South Africa attached to the 10th Hussars. He is succeeded by his brother, Mr. Hugh Edwards.

STATISTICS.

AUSTRALIA had about 1,000,000 aborigines 100 years ago. Now they have dwindled to less than 100,000.

JAPAN's mercantile fleet consists of 735 vessels; Russia's, 2,774. Japan, however, has 570 steamers, against Russia's 567.

If all the mountains in the world were levelled, the average height of the land would rise nearly 250 feet.

THERE are at the present time at least 10,000,000 bicycles in use in the world, and it is calculated that the number is increasing at the rate of 2,000,000 a year.

GEMS.

EVERY life touches many other lives. Let us move more softly through the world lest our touch be a harsh and hurtful touch.

A FALSE report does not last long, and the life one leads is always the best apology of that which one has led.

WE are as great as we are good; as insignificant as we are self-conceited; as noble as we are truthful, and as religiously beautiful as we are charitable.

THOUGHT, if translated truly, cannot be lost in another language; but the words that convey it to our apprehension, which are the image and ornament of that thought, may be so ill-chosen as to make it appear unhandsome.

RIGHT in one thing becomes a preliminary towards right in everything; the transition is not distant from the feeling that tells us that we should do harm to no man, to that which tells us that we should endeavour to do good to all men.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

CHICKEN SALAD.—Use a pint of cold roasted chicken cut in small pieces, and one-half as much celery—choosing the crisp white stalks—cut in thin pieces. Moisten with a French dressing, and set on the ice to chill if liked. Have your mayonnaise or boiled dressing prepared, and at serving-time mix a part with the chicken and celery, arrange in a salad-dish, pour the rest of the dressing over, and garnish with capers, bits of olive, and celery-leaves.

GOOSEBERRY CRISPS.—Ingredients: One quart green gooseberries, four yolks of eggs, two ounces castor sugar. Wash and stalk the gooseberries, then boil them till soft—in just enough water to keep them from burning. When soft rub them through a sieve. Stir into the pulp the sugar and beaten yolks. Cook this pulp over a slow fire for about ten minutes or till the eggs thicken, but do not let the mixture boil or it will curdle. Then allow to get cold. Serve in small glasses, with a tiny heap of whipped cream on the top.

HOTCH POTCH.—One and a-half pounds shoulder of mutton, six or eight potatoes, one good-sized onion, one or two mutton kidneys, one teaspoonful salt, quarter spoonful of pepper. Cut the mutton into chops as neatly as possible, pare and slice the potatoes thickly, skin and slice the kidneys. Now take a deep pie-dish, put a layer of the mutton in the bottom; then some kidney. Chop the onions, sprinkle some over; then a layer of potato, and then part of the seasoning. Repeat with some more meat, kidney, onions, seasoning, and cover the whole of the top with the potatoes. Fill the dish up with water. Put a paper over the top, thickly greased with good dripping, and put the dish in the oven for one and a-half hours or even longer if the oven is not very hot. Take the paper off near the end, and let the potatoes brown but not burn. It is used hot, and sent to the table in the dish.

MISCELLANEOUS.

POLITE Chinamen consider it a breach of etiquette to wear spectacles in company.

In the Philippines the parting benediction is bestowed in the form of rubbing one's friend's face with one's hand.

A PECULIAR rose has been successfully cultivated by Japanese florists. In the sunlight it looks red and in the shade it is white.

WOOD-PULP paper as military clothing is used by the Japanese troops. It is marvellously tough and has a neat appearance.

THERE is a hospital for trees on the banks of the Seine in Paris. Trees which do not thrive on the boulevards are taken there to recover.

THE colour of the Arctic fox is dark blue in summer, but in the autumn it changes gradually until winter, when it assumes the tint of snow.

THERE is no word in the Chinese language that conveys an intimation of what we term public spirit, nor is there a synonym for patriotism.

An eminent physiologist asserts that the weight of a woman's brain decreases after the age of thirty, while that of a man does not decrease until ten years later.

THE vegetable ivory of Ecuador is the nut of a native palm. The exports amount to 11,500 tons per annum, of which two-thirds go to Germany and one-sixth to the United States.

STREET CARS in Germany have conspicuously displayed the number of passengers which they are permitted to carry. When the stated number is on the car, no other passengers are permitted to enter.

NEAR the coast of Cuba a fresh-water spring arises from the bottom of the ocean, and for some distance round the water is perfectly fresh. A similar submarine spring is known to exist in the Gulf of Spitzbergen.

THE largest and most cumbersome form of money is found in Central Africa, where the natives use a cross-shaped lugot of copper ore over ten inches long. It is heavy enough to be a formidable weapon.

A MACHINE for cutting and buttering bread is in successful operation. It is intended for prisons and reformatories. After the bread comes from the cutter, a cylindrical brush spreads on it a thin layer of butter.

THE white ants of Manila are fond of wood. They bore holes from the outside, enter in thousands, and eat articles of furniture until little is left but mere shells. Sometimes they devour the legs of a chair so that when a person sits down the chair crumbles under him, and he suddenly and ungracefully lands on the floor.

CANADA boasts of one of the most wonderful farms in the world. Its peculiarity lies in the fact that everything is worked by electricity. The two waterfalls within the bounds of the farm, some sixty feet and one hundred and eighty feet high, furnish the motive power, a central power house being erected near, and the current is transmitted by wires to every available place on the farm.

If the winters are long in Siberia, and very cold, the summers are extremely warm and dry. The small streams of water dry up during this season, and agriculture suffers much from this state of things. To remedy the evil, the inhabitants of certain districts during the winter collect the snow which, as is well known, falls in abundance in these regions, and accumulate it at the bottom of some narrow valley. They press it and make it compact, so that it will be more resistant to thawing. At the end of the winter they cover the enormous piles which they have thus formed with branches, straw, manure, or earth, in order to protect the snow against the rays of the sun and the exterior heat. Then, when after long days without rain the temperature is much elevated and the water of the streams begins to dry up, the snow, in spite of its covering, commences to melt, and by means of a ditch made for this purpose, the water which runs down supplies the river until the return of winter.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

R. F.—You are responsible as their stepfather.
 G. R.—The landlord is acting within his rights.
 A. P.—It depends upon the exact terms of the will.
 H. K.—Your late husband's debts must be paid out of his estate.

D. L.—Wash in whiting and water. Soap destroys the brilliancy.

V. G.—Preliminary training is necessary. Inquire of a medical man.

D. S.—The marriage stands good; there should be no difficulty.

M. R.—On payment of one shilling you can search the records at Somerset House.

E. H.—Use cautiously a little diluted oxalic acid, and when the stain is removed sponge out.

M. A.—No, but you should have the bed-clothes washed and aired, and the room disinfected.

S. R.—It will be quite legal if your friend is married in the name by which he had always been known.

C. R.—Without a divorce or the death of the husband, the wife could not legally marry again.

G. H.—You may clean the soles of your uniform by sponging them with ammonia dissolved in warm water.

T. H.—Horses invariably go out in charge of cavaliers; there is no demand for grooms so far as we know.

M. R.—We cannot give medical advice in this column. For your eyes, above all things, you should consult a specialist.

C. H.—There is an organisation known as the Anti-Gambling League, the headquarters of which are in London.

M. H.—They are mildest stains, and we cannot advise you to attempt removing them, as to do so greatly endangers the colour.

G. H.—Rosemary steeped in water cleanses the hair nicely; or an egg, well beaten and mixed in warm water, has the same effect.

O. W.—You cannot compel your husband to maintain you while you continue to live away from him having left him voluntarily.

M. T.—Take a strip of old carpet tuck it tightly on the knife-board, sprinkle with salt-brick. This will produce a good polish without scratching the knife.

R. H.—To remove varnish stains from cloth rub some methylated spirit well into the stain; then finish off with a solution of ammonia or Sanlight soap and water.

H. H.—Napoleon the First was never a prisoner in Germany; he surrendered to the British after Waterloo, and to keep him out of further mischief was exiled to St. Helena.

L. H.—No doubt the mischief was done by putting the coloured and white things together, it must never be done; neither should the coarse and fine things be washed together.

A. H.—There is, of course, a Registrar-General in London, but except you can say where the man died, it is not worth while writing to him for information; he could not give it.

O. R.—Scrape some French chalk, put it on the grease spot, and hold it over the fire. The grease will melt, and the French chalk absorb it. Brush it off; repeat if necessary.

I. H.—Bronze decorative ornaments should be put always in drawing-room—statuettes, clocks, candlesticks—these accord well with rich, warm colour in carpet, walls, and curtains.

D. H.—Married life with a jealous husband is not a happy one to look forward to, and you would do well to do something to exorcise such a spirit before you become irrevocably united to him.

A. F.—It is rather difficult for us to reply to your queries without knowing all the facts of the case. We think you would be well advised to refer the questions to a responsible solicitor.

L. H.—There is no more hopeless task than smothering cleaning, particularly as your silk is such a delicate colour. It would be best to send it to a professional cleaner, and will not be more expensive.

A. F.—Magnesia is an antidote to arsenic, equally efficacious with peroxide of iron, and preferable to it, inasmuch as it is completely innocuous in almost any quantity, and can be procured in any form.

L. G.—Mix some fine whiting in a little diluted alcohol, and smother it upon the glass with a soft rag, after which rub off with chamois leather. Looking-glasses may thus be cleaned, and fly specks, &c., removed.

W. R.—The old morocco leather should be well rubbed with a discoloured flannel dipped in soap, then rubbed dry with wadding cloth, and afterwards brushed with clean shoe brush, or the leather may have a coating of egg glue given to it.

C. H.—A ready-made metal wardrobe for hanging dresses in is made by putting a shelf in a corner of a room about six feet from the floor, with a brass rod along its front edge, from which curtains are hung and make the doors of the wardrobe.

ACQUA.—To prevent calico from fading while washing, infuse three gills of salt in four quarts of water; put the calico in while hot, and leave it till cold. In this way the colours are rendered permanent, and will not fade by subsequent washings.

ADA.—An excellent means for improving the appearance, flexibility and wearing quality of oil-cloths is to apply one or two coats of raw linseed oil, and, when this is dry, a coat or two of varnish, the latter being renewed once or twice a year.

STY.—To improve your nails, instead of scrubbing them with a brush to remove the dirt, keep half a lemon on your washstand, and dig your fingers in this after washing till all dirt is removed. Beside cleaning the nails this treatment helps to make them a good colour.

A. G.—Take of cloves, caraway seeds, nutmeg, mace, cinnamon, and Tonquin beans, of each one ounce; then add as much Florentine orris-root as will equal the other ingredients put together. Grind the whole well to powder, and then put it in little bags, among your clothes, &c.

M. R.—Wives and children of reservists now at the front or in barracks receive allotment from the war funds on making application; cases are all considered on their merits, and where applicants can show that they are really in need of assistance relief is usually forthcoming.

T. M.—The best way to keep tobacco is in a tin box or an earthenware jar. A piece of calico should be laid over the tobacco and kept damp, and the lid should always be kept on the jar or box. A few strips of apple put among the tobacco will, it is said, make it smoke more agreeable.

A. E.—There are two distinct species of camels; the Arabian camel, commonly known as the dromedary, has one hump and four callouses on the fore legs and two on the hind legs; the Bactrian camel has two humps. The first-mentioned camel, the *camelus dromedarius*, is chiefly used in Arabia and Egypt.

A PATHETIC INCIDENT.

Gentle and brave amid the ranks he rode,
 And felt the steel beneath him proud and true;
 Gentle and brave the steel beneath him strode,
 And felt "My master's hand will guide me through."

And hour on hour, through dying and through dead,
 And leashed by rain from heaven, and hail from hell,
 From morn to eve, unceasingly alike, they sped,
 But at the close of day the charger fell.

He saw the shattered limb, the heaving breast,
 And eyes entreating aid he could not lend;
 With kiss on kiss the valiant mortal pressed,
 And longed, yet loathed, his agony to end.

And heedless for a while his trumpet blared,
 Or round him round and flashed the fiery arms,
 He who all day the battle's word had dared,
 Now dared not brave the bivouac alarm.

Then in one sob a fond farewell he spoke,
 The loaded death with hand reluctant drew.

O dear dumb friends! O patient of our yoke!
 There's many a heart ye know not aches for you.

HOUSEWIFE.—Put some hot water on a plate. Put the piece of the blanket with the stain in it on the top, in the hot water. See that the hot water is quite through the blanket. Now put on the stain some liquid chloride of lime. Let it remain for a short time. It may require a second application.

E. N.—Mix a little French chalk to a cream with lavender-water. Rub this gently into the stain, lay a sheet of perfectly clean blotting-paper over it, and iron with a moderately hot iron. When the chalk is quite dry, remove the blotting-paper, and dust the chalk off with a soft, clean brush.

M. G.—Use the juice of an onion for taking out scorch marks. Boil the onion, and then squeeze out the juice, mix it with an ounce of fuller's earth, a little shredded soap, and a wineglassful of vinegar. Heat together till the soap has dissolved, leave till cold, and then apply to the linen. Let dry, and wash in the usual way.

I. A.—Nothing can be done with a birthmark except to conceal it as much as possible; it cannot be cut out of the skin or removed by other means. You must remember that the continued application of cosmetics of any kind is injurious to the skin, and should only be resorted to in exceptional cases, and then the purity of the article should be unquestioned.

I. G.—A gondola is a long, narrow boat used chiefly on the canals of Venice. The boat is propelled by means of oars or poles by one, two, or occasionally four men. The rowers stand as they row, and wear the livery of the family to which the gondola belongs. The term "gondola" is also applied to passage boats having six or eight oars, and used in other parts of Italy.

N. A.—First brush very thoroughly. Dissolve a piece of gum arabic about the size of a very small nut in three tablespoonfuls of cold water (it is really better to put this to soak the night before you want to use it), add a few drops of lemon-juice, and brush this thoroughly all over the hat, being careful that the brush penetrates to every crevice. Pull into the proper shape, and dry in a shady place out of doors.

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D. A.—Do not use soap. Instead, scrub with cold water, to which a little salt has been added. Rubs quickly with cold water—but do not make water than is absolutely necessary—and dry in the open air as soon as possible. You can clean floor-matting in the same way, but this should be hung over a clothes line and allowed to thoroughly dry before being relaid.

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